THE AMAZING SCREW-ON HEAD™

and Other Curious Objects

MIKE MIGNOLA
DAVE STEWART

20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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and Other Curious Objects

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by MIKE MIGNOLA

"The Magician and the Snake"
by KATIE MIGNOLA and MIKE MIGNOLA

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Published by Dark Horse Books
A division of Dark Horse Comics LLC
10956 SE Main Street • Milwaukie, OR 97222

DarkHorse.com
Comic Shop Locator Service: Comicshoplocator.com

First edition: June 2022
ebook ISBN: 978-1-50672-863-6
ISBN: 978-1-50672-862-9

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2
Printed in China

Image on the facing page is available from the United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division under the digital ID cph.3a53289

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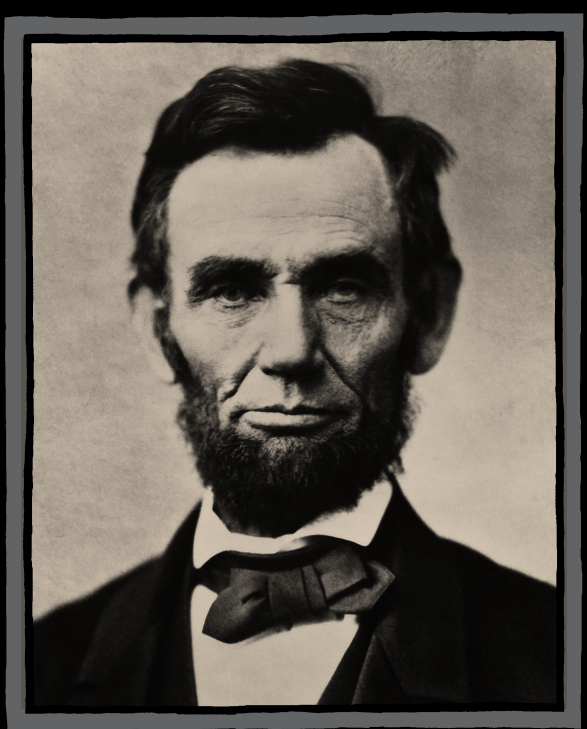
This book collects *The Amazing Screw-On Head* comic book, the story "The Magician and the Snake" from *Dark Horse Maverick: Happy Endings*, published by Dark Horse Comics, and "Abu Gung and the Beanstalk," "The Witch and Her Soul," "The Prisoner of Mars," and "In the Chapel of Curious Objects," all originally published by Dark Horse Comics.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Mignola, Mike, author. | Stewart, Dave, illustrator. | Robins, Clem, 1955- letterer. | Brosseau, Pat, letterer.
Title: The amazing screw-on head and other curious objects / by Mike Mignola ; colors by Dave Stewart ; letters by Clem Robins & Pat Brosseau.
Description: Anniversary edition. | Milwaukie, OR : Dark Horse Books, 2022. | "This book collects The Amazing Screw-On Head comic book, the story "The Magician and the Snake" from Dark Horse Maverick: Happy Endings, published by Dark Horse Comics, and "Abu Gung and the Beanstalk," "The Witch and Her Soul," "The Prisoner of Mars," and "In the Chapel of Curious Objects," all originally published by Dark Horse Comics." | Summary: "Emperor Zombie is trying to take over the world once again! The Amazing Screw-On Head has been enlisted by President Lincoln to stop the evil emperor, with the help of his faithful partner Mr. Groin and his trusty canine companion Mr. Dog. Screw-On head will have to brave ancient tombs and defeat demons from a dimension inside a turnip, just one of the strange and mischievous tales in this beloved collection. This special hardcover edition of The Amazing Screw-On Head and Other Curious Objects celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Eisner Award-winning collections' original publication, with 40 pages of new material by Mike Mignola including his 19-page, never before published comic Axorr!"-- Provided by publisher.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021058310 (print) | LCCN 2021058311 (ebook) | ISBN 9781506728629 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781506728636 (ebook)
Subjects: LCGFT: Paranormal comics. | Horror comics.
Classification: LCC PN6727.M53 A763 2022 (print) | LCC PN6727.M53 (ebook) | DDC 741.5/973--dc23/eng/20220114
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021058310
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021058311

For my wife, my daughter, and former
U.S. President Abraham Lincoln.



INTRODUCTION

First, to be clear, this is the 20th anniversary of the one-issue Screw-On Head *comic book*, not the "And Other Curious Objects" collection. But of all the things I've done, this is still the book I'm most proud of. And it contains that original Screw-On Head story, so there you go.

Back in 1993, when I started drawing the first *Hellboy* book, I had no idea I was creating something that would stick around. I hoped it would. I hoped people would like it, but what was most important to me after ten years bouncing around Marvel and DC comics, drawing those characters, was that I put something out there that was really ME. Something that would really show the kind of stuff that rattles around in my head. I figured I'd do it the one time and then maybe do another Batman book or something, come back to Hellboy in between more commercial projects. Well, that didn't happen—*Hellboy* was never a huge hit, but it did well enough that I never had to go back to the other stuff. It became my full-time job, which was amazingly great, but after a while it started to feel . . . *safe*. And so—THE AMAZING SCREW-ON HEAD.

As with Hellboy years earlier, my main goal with Screw-On Head was to create something that was pure *me*, only now this was the me that had been getting away with Hellboy for years. It was a much different place to start from. And this time I had no intention of creating anything that was meant to stick around; this would just be some crazy objects bouncing around in the puppet-show world of old buildings and outdated machines, just stuff that I wanted to draw. It was meant to be funny, and maybe it would only be funny to me, but that was okay. I really was doing it just for me. I just felt to the need to put new version of me out there. And let me tell you, there is nothing better than doing something just for yourself and finding that other people really like it, too. Maybe it shows when you're doing something for the pure joy of just doing it. I don't know, but right away people started telling me it was the best thing I'd ever done. That was the same response I'd gotten a few years earlier, after doing the Hellboy story "The Corpse," the first Hellboy story where I just relaxed and had fun. Nice.

About this collection: At some point I realized that when people were telling me how much they liked Screw-On Head, they weren't talking about the comic—they were talking about an animated pilot for an unproduced TV show. They didn't know the comic at all. It had just been a one-issue comic and was, I assume, long out of print. I had to do something about that, and getting the comic back in print wasn't going to be enough. I had done one other short story with my daughter, "The Magician and the Snake," that I was really proud of but that was only six pages long, so the two stories together were still not nearly long enough to make a book. So I had to see if I could get back into this world (that isn't a world) and do some new stories. Much to my relief (and a little surprise), I found it was super easy. It all started with Screw-On Head, but apparently that puppet world (non-world) is mostly what fills my head now, at least the artist part of my head. It's pretty much informed everything I've done since. Most drawings and paintings I do for fun these days are a look into this place. When I killed off Hellboy and sent him to Hell, his Hell was just a slight variation on this place. It has no rules, it's just made of all the stuff I like, the stuff I want to draw—it's just all *me*. If you want to see what the inside of my head looks like, it's here.

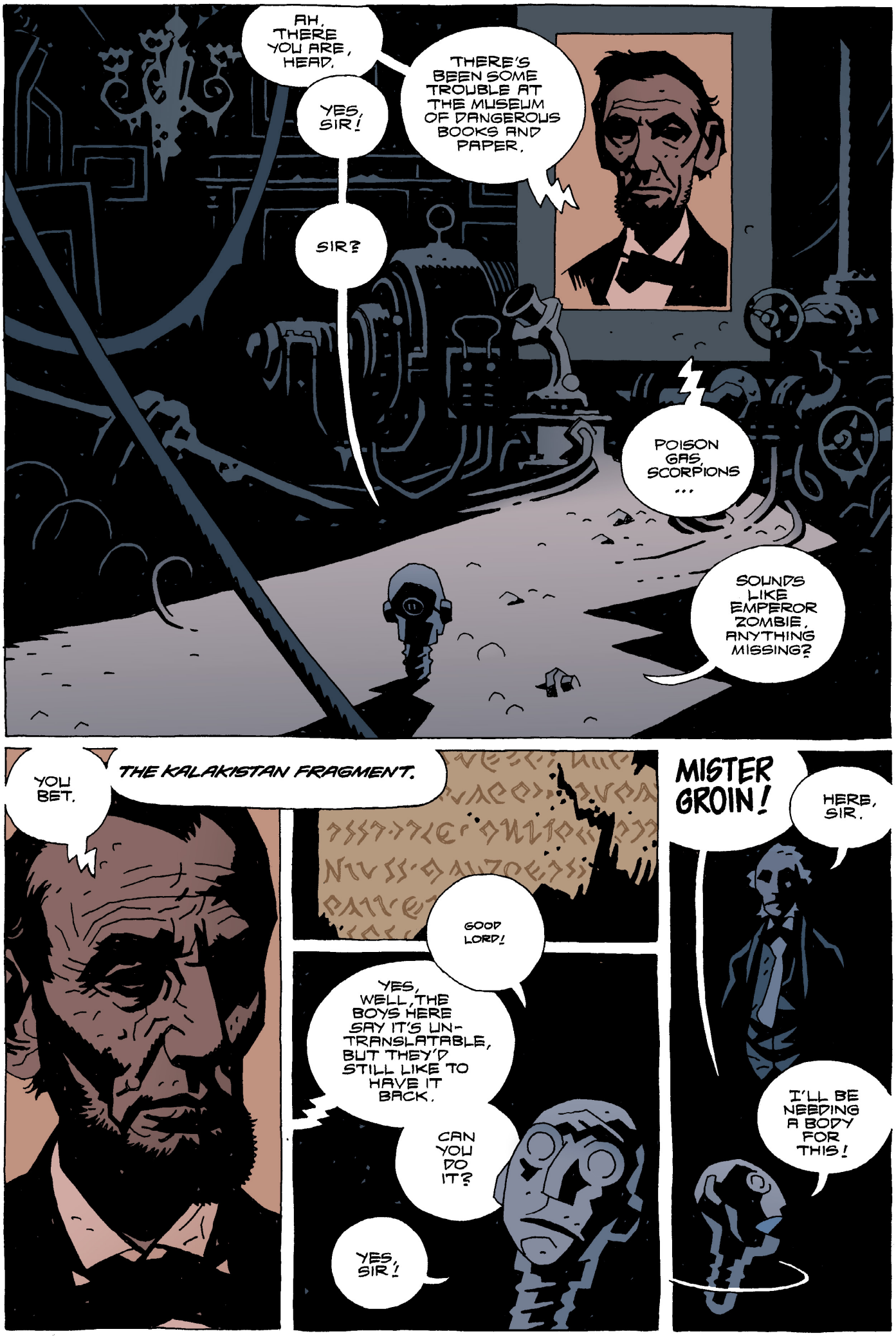
About this 20th Anniversary edition—I've added a bunch of odd little drawings of old buildings and puppet people. There are also nineteen page of an odd thing that didn't get finished, but more about that later. This introduction has already gone on way too long. Hopefully you skipped past it and went right on to the stories—That's what I would have done.

PART ONE

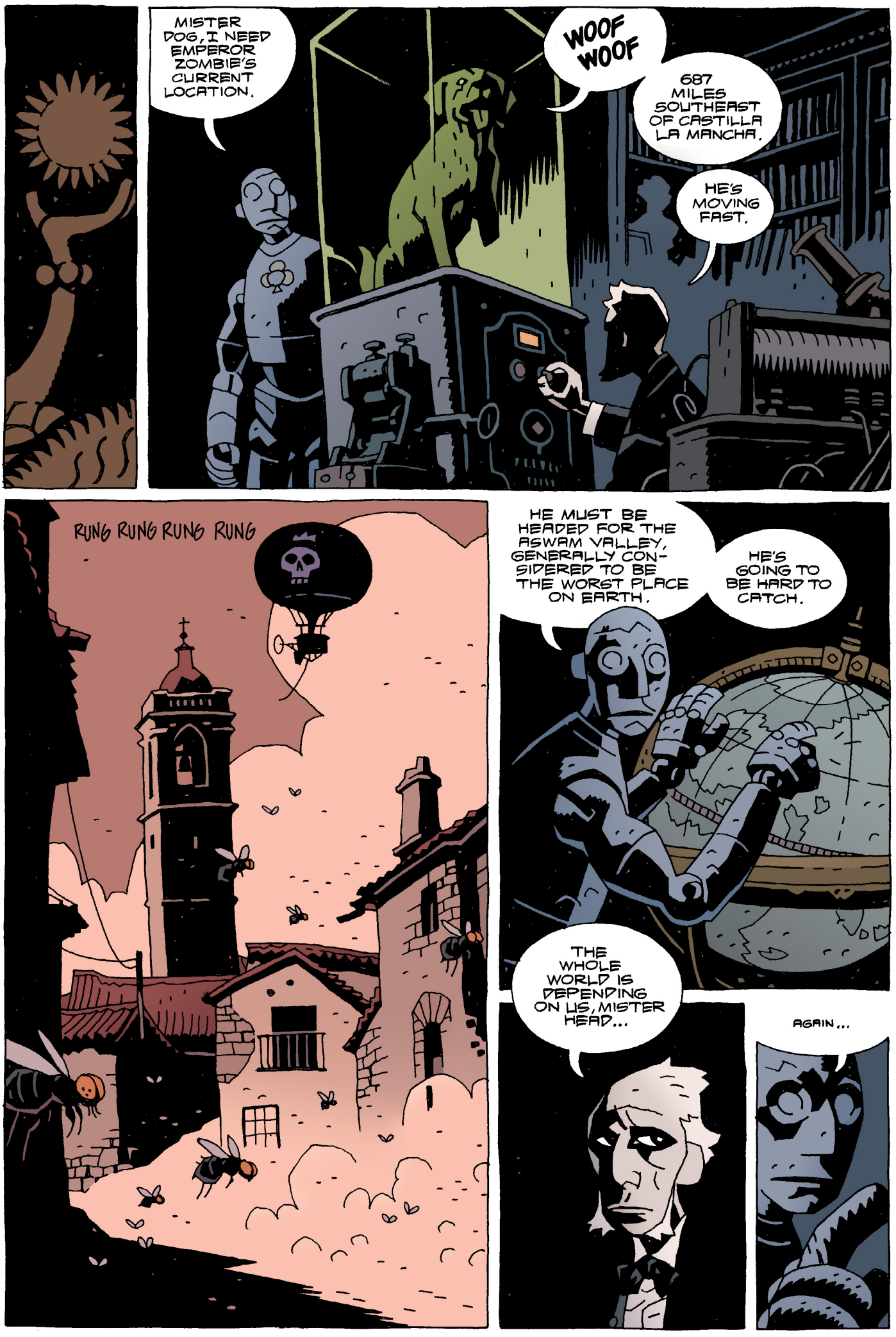
THE AMAZING SCREW-ON HEAD

HAT PRECIOUS
SCREW-ON HEAD...
CALLING SCREW-ON HEAD...
"SCREW-ON HEAD..."

"CALLING SCREW-ON HEAD..."
PING PING PING
COMING, MISTER PRESIDENT!

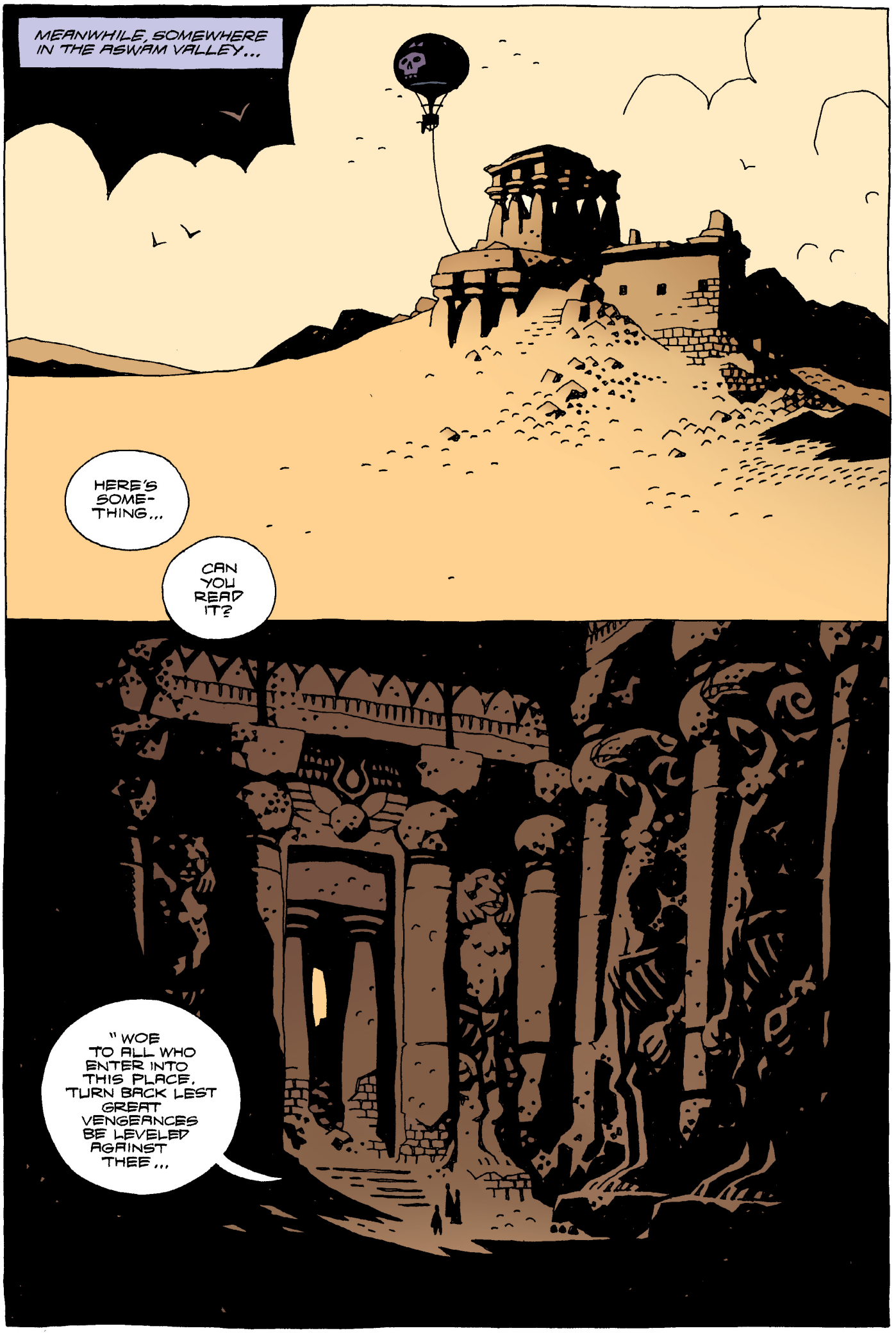

AH, THERE YOU ARE, HEAD.
YES, SIR!
SIR?
THERE'S BEEN SOME TROUBLE AT THE MUSEUM OF DANGEROUS BOOKS AND PAPER.
POISON GAS, SCORPIONS ...
SOUNDS LIKE EMPEROR ZOMBIE, ANYTHING MISSING?
YOU BET.
THE KALAKISTAN FRAGMENT.
GOOD LORD!
YES, WELL, THE BOYS HERE SAY IT'S UN-TRANSLATABLE, BUT THEY'D STILL LIKE TO HAVE IT BACK.
CAN YOU DO IT?
YES, SIR!
MISTER GROIN!
HERE, SIR.
I'LL BE NEEDING A BODY FOR THIS!

HMM... LET'S SEE NOW... NO, NO. NOT THAT...
WHAT ABOUT LUCKY 13?
YES, ANYTHING, ONLY LET US HAVE PROGRESS!
IT'S A MATTER OF SOME URGENCY THEN?
WHIRRRR
KUNG
THE KALAKISTAN FRAGMENT SUPPOSEDLY DETAILS THE LIFE OF GUNG THE MAGNIFICENT, WHO NEARLY CONQUERED THE WORLD IN 9632 B.C. WITH SUPERNATURAL POWERS DERIVED FROM A "FABULOUS MELON-SIZED JEWEL."
IF IT TELLS THE LOCATION OF THAT JEWEL...
BUT IF IT'S UN-TRANSLATA-BLE--
UN-TRANSLATED SO FAR. YOU FORGET THAT IN LIFE EMPEROR ZOMBIE WAS PROFESSOR H.G. MANIFOLD.
THE MASTER OF ANCIENT LANGUAGES!
IT'S AS YOU ALWAYS SAY, SIR, ALL REALLY INTELLI-GENT PEOPLE SHOULD BE CREMATED--
FOR THE SAKE OF NATIONAL SECURITY.


MISTER DOG, I NEED EMPEROR ZOMBIE'S CURRENT LOCATION.
WOOF WOOF
687 MILES SOUTHEAST OF CASTILLA LA MANCHA.
HE'S MOVING FAST.
RUNG RUNG RUNG RUNG
HE MUST BE HEADED FOR THE ASWAM VALLEY, GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE THE WORST PLACE ON EARTH.
HE'S GOING TO BE HARD TO CATCH.
THE WHOLE WORLD IS DEPENDING ON US, MISTER HEAD...
AGAIN...

THEREFORE LET US BE BOLD IN OUR ACTIONS. BEST SPEED BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY.
BEWARE, EMPEROR ZOMBIE, WE ARE COMING FOR YOU!
AND SO, MOMENTS LATER...
READY, MISTER GROIN?
ALL RIGHT, THEN...
READY, MISTER HEAD.
BOMBS AWAY!
GOD-SPEED, SCREW-ON HEAD.

BOOM
BACK TO EARTH, PLEASE, MISTER GROIN.
!
FWOOSH

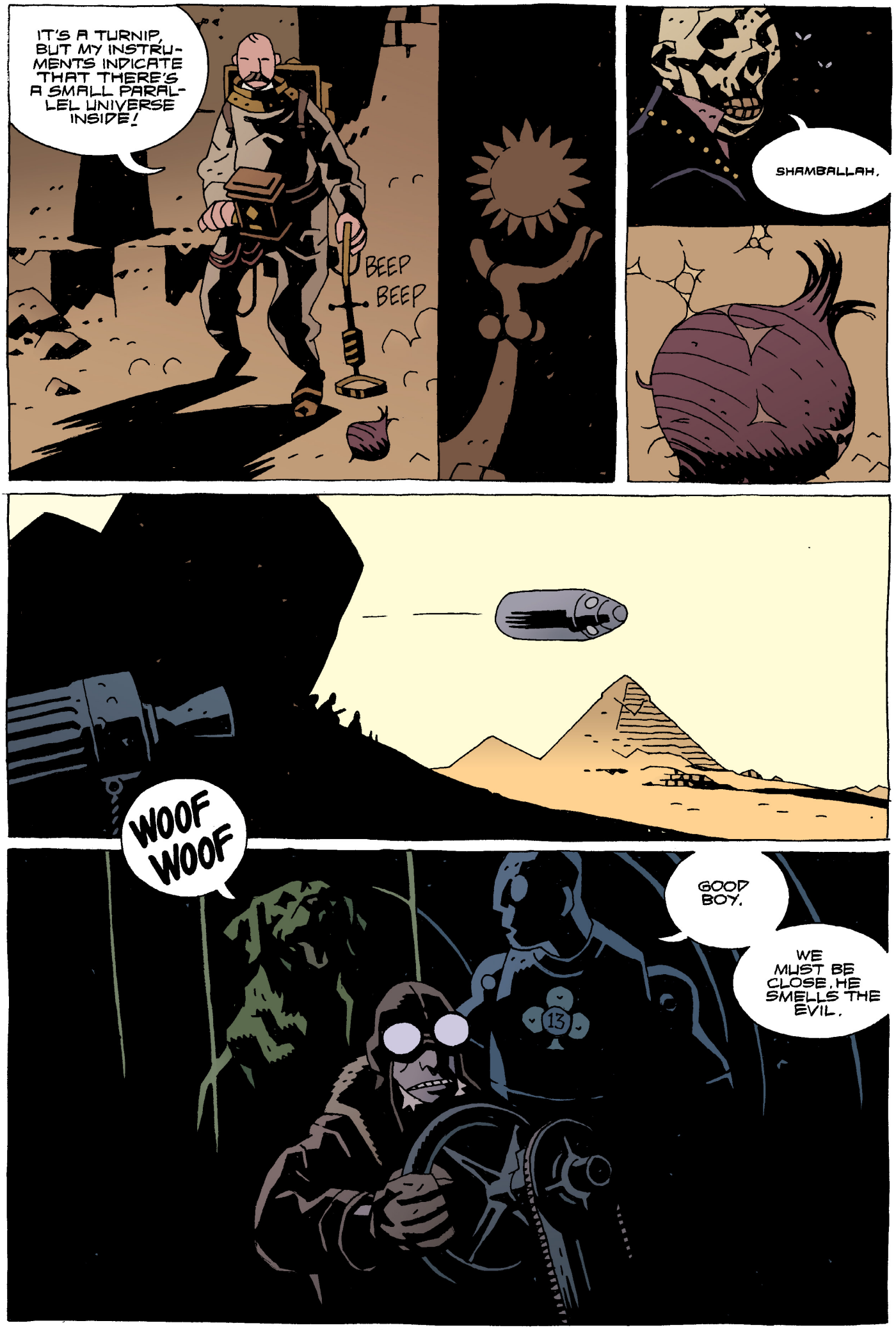

MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE IN THE ASWAM VALLEY...
HERE'S SOME-THING...
CAN YOU READ IT?
" WOE TO ALL WHO ENTER INTO THIS PLACE. TURN BACK LEST GREAT VENGEANCES BE LEVELED AGAINST THEE ...

"...FOR THIS IS THE TOMB OF GUNG."
WELL, DOCTOR SNAP?
SPOT ON, ZOMBIE. YOU'VE DONE IT!
I HAVE.
AND WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY, MADAM?
M...
BZZZ
YES, I AM A GENIUS.
HAHAHA
?
HA!
FOLLOW ME!

GLING.
!
NOW HIS GREAT OBJECT BELONGS TO ME!

FOOLISH MORTAL,
BEWARE MY...
QUIET, YOU HORRIBLE THING!
BLAM BLAM
THUD

HERE IT IS.
BANGANG AGRO-ESH. THE LEFT EYE OF NOG. THE JEWEL WORSHIPED BY THE WIZARDS OF MU AND THE BLACK PRIESTS OF ATLANTIS...
"... FINALLY PASSED DOWN TO GUNG THE MAGNIFICENT, WHO WAS CHOSEN BY THE GODS TO CONQUER THE WORLD..."
AND NOW--
AHHHHHHH!
IT'S NOT A JEWEL...IT'S A DIRTY OLD PIECE OF CRAP...


IT'S A TURNIP, BUT MY INSTRUMENTS INDICATE THAT THERE'S A SMALL PARALLEL UNIVERSE INSIDE!
BEEP BEEP
SHAMBALLAH.
WOOF WOOF
GOOD BOY.
WE MUST BE CLOSE. HE SMELLS THE EVIL.

BOOM
WE'RE COOKED!
STEADY ON, MISTER GROIN.
YES, SIR.
MAYBE YOU'D BETTER GO ON AHEAD, SIR.
POOT
BOOM BOOM BOOM

BRAPAPAP
PING PING PING PING
LONG LIVE EMPEROR ZOMBIE!
PUT PUT
MEANWHILE, BACK INSIDE THE TOMB OF GUNG THE MAGNIFICENT...

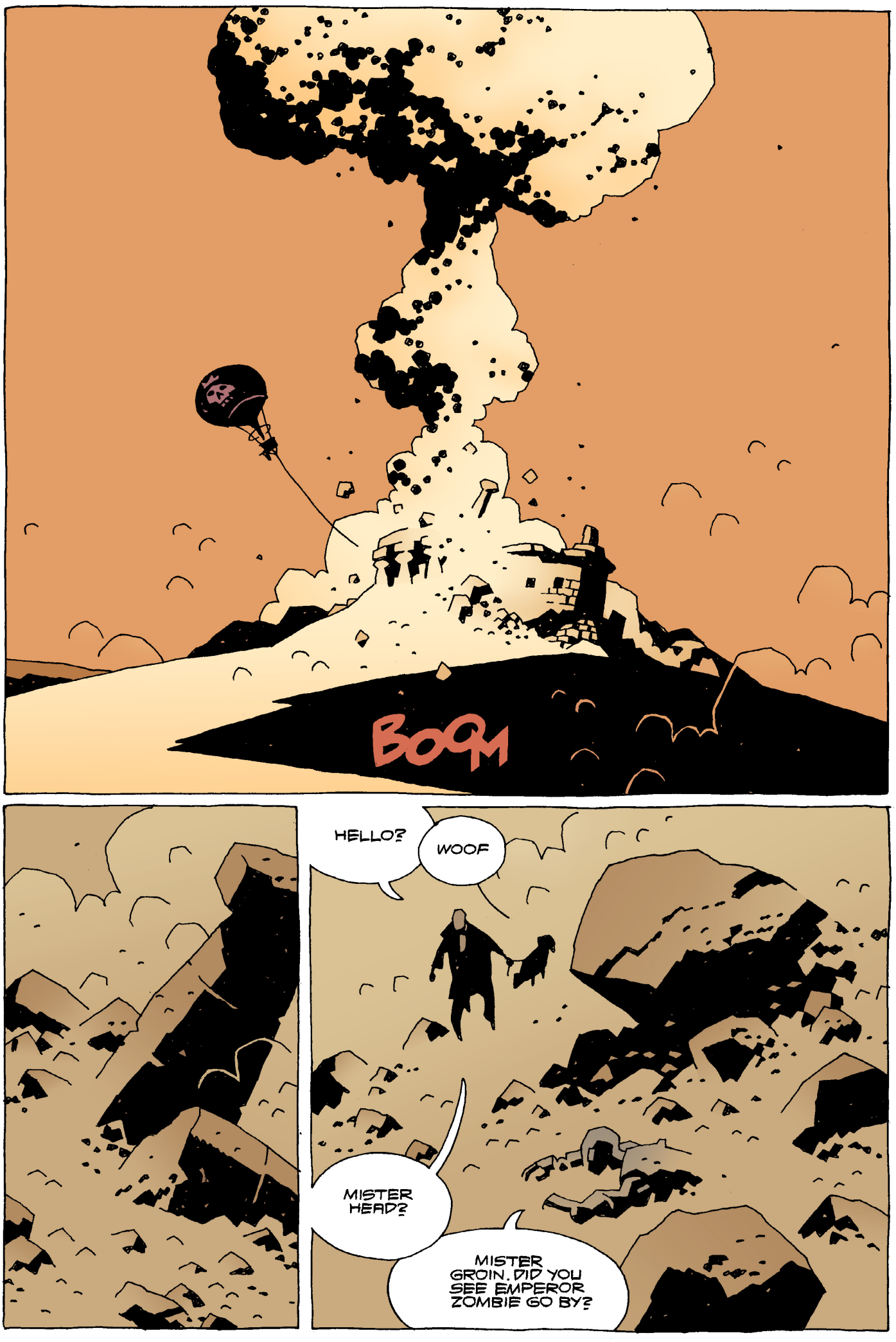
SHAMBALLAH!
WELL, I GUESS IT COULD BE THAT...
ZZZ
THE HIDDEN CITY OF THE SECRET MASTERS! WITH THEIR VRIL POWER THEY COMMAND THE ELEMENTS AND ALL KINDS OF STUFF LIKE THAT!
WE'LL SEE.
I'M ABOUT TO ESTABLISH CONTACT.
ZZZ
POKE
OOPS.
ZZZ
ZAP

HA HA HAA!
STUPID HUMANS.
DOCTOR SNAP?

FREE AT LAST FROM MY VEGETABLE PRISON!
YOUR POOR, SAD, INSIGNIFICANT BRAINS CANNOT CONCEIVE OF THE HORROR THAT IS COMING NOW!
POOF

BOOM
NOT SO FAST, EMPEROR ZOMBIE!
WHAT?
SCREW-ON HEAD!
I SURRENDER! TAKE ME TO JAIL!
SQUEEE

BAH! YOU ARE AN IRRITANT TO ME!
SPANG
!
NOW, THE HORROR ...
TIME TO BEGIN THE HORROR!
I CAN'T ALLOW THAT...
I WORK FOR THE PRESIDENT.
KL'K
PONG!
?
SHOOMP


BOOM
HELLO?
WOOF
MISTER HEAD?
MISTER GROIN. DID YOU SEE EMPEROR ZOMBIE GO BY?

RUNG
RUNG
YES, SIR. I DID.
HE SCRAMBLED UP THE ANCHOR LINE INTO HIS EVIL SKULL BALLOON.
HE'S ALREADY GETTING UNDER-WAY.
THIS BODY'S TOO BANGED UP TO FLY, BUT SOON ENOUGH WE'LL MEET AGAIN, AND THEN--
CLINK
KUNG!
!
THAT'S A BOLD PLAN OF ACTION, MISTER HEAD!
WOOF!
RUNG RUNG RUNG

RUNG RUNG
THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT. THE WHOLE WORLD MUST BE MADE TO SUFFER FOR THIS INDIGNITY!
MMM...
YES!
A
B
C
BUT WHAT SORT OF PUNISH-MENT?
POISON FROGS? PLAGUE RATS? GIANT FIRE-BREATHING ROBOT?
WHY NOT ALL THREE?
MARRY ME.

NOT SO FAST, EMPEROR ZOMBIE!
SCREW-ON HEAD!
CURSE YOUR ILL TIMING.
POOF
KRANG
SQUEEE!
GRRR
ARARAR
STAY OUT OF THOSE WIRES, YOU FOOL!
BZZZT--

OH.
BOOM
ANOTHER JOB WELL DONE, SCREW-ON HEAD.
ONCE AGAIN THE EARTH IS A SAFE PLACE FOR LIVING HUMANS.
THANK YOU, MISTER PRESI-DENT.

OUR HERO.
!
SCREW ON HEAD
AT THIS JUNCTURE, WE HAD HOPED TO PRESENT THE SECRET ORIGIN OF SCREW-ON HEAD, BUT, AS IT TURNS OUT, THE DAMN THING'S A SECRET!
SO INSTEAD WE PRESENT THREE HORRIBLE OLD WOMEN AND A MONKEY.
CHEERS!

WEREWOLF

CANNIBAL

CRIMINAL
LUNATIC

THE
END

NEWLY UNEARTHED CURIOSITIES
FROM THE SECRET FILES
OF THE AMAZING SCREW-ON HEAD

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1
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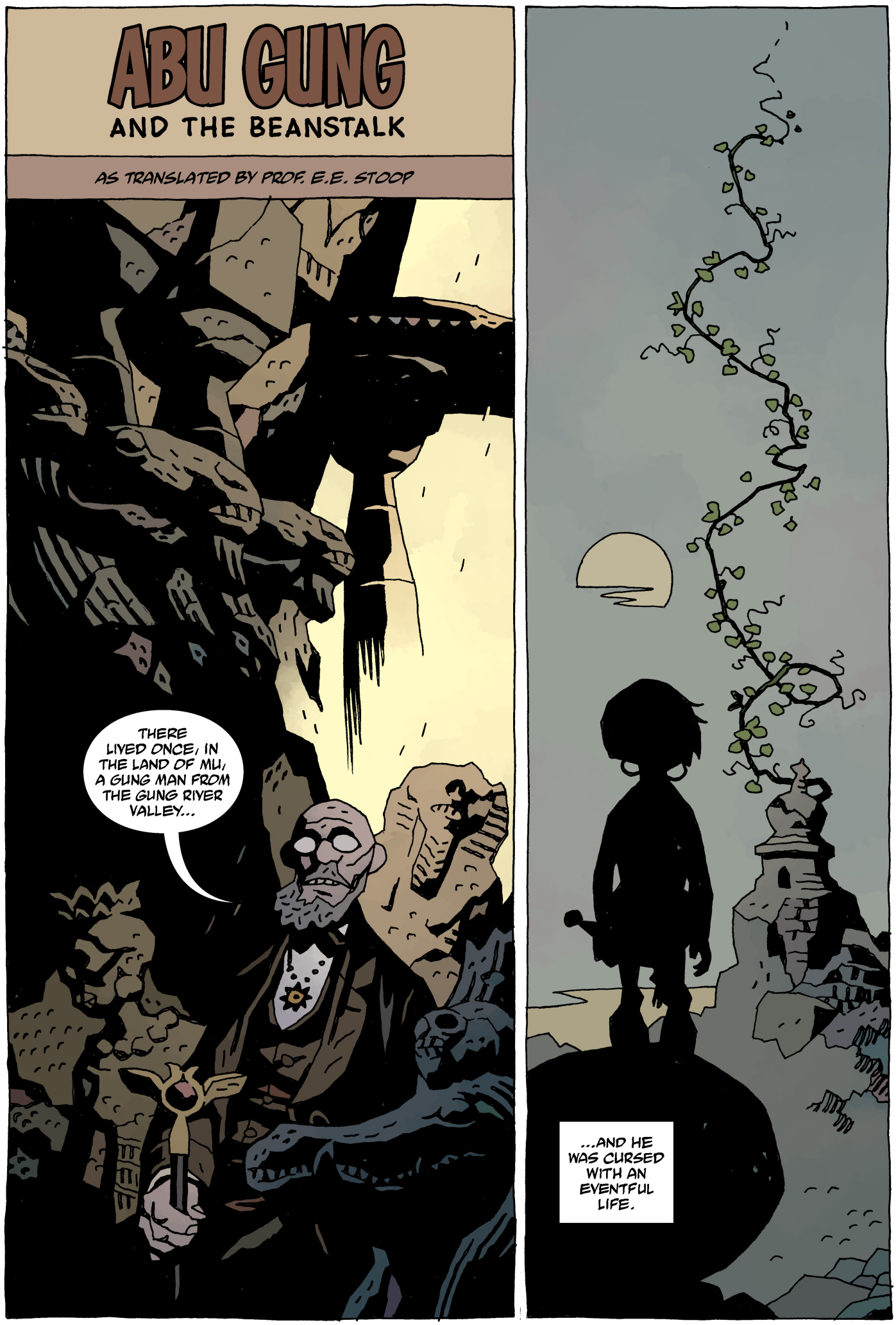
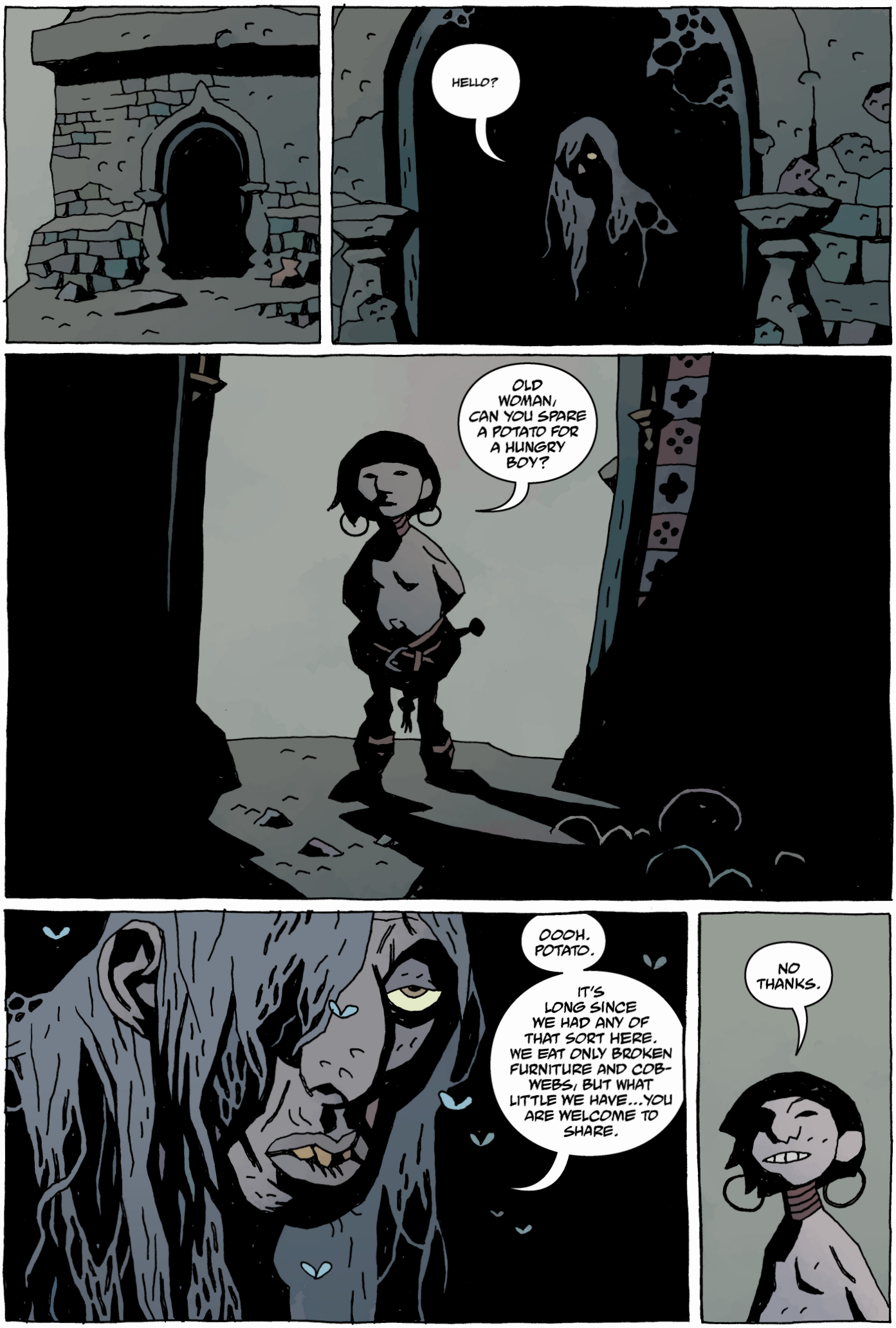
PART TWO

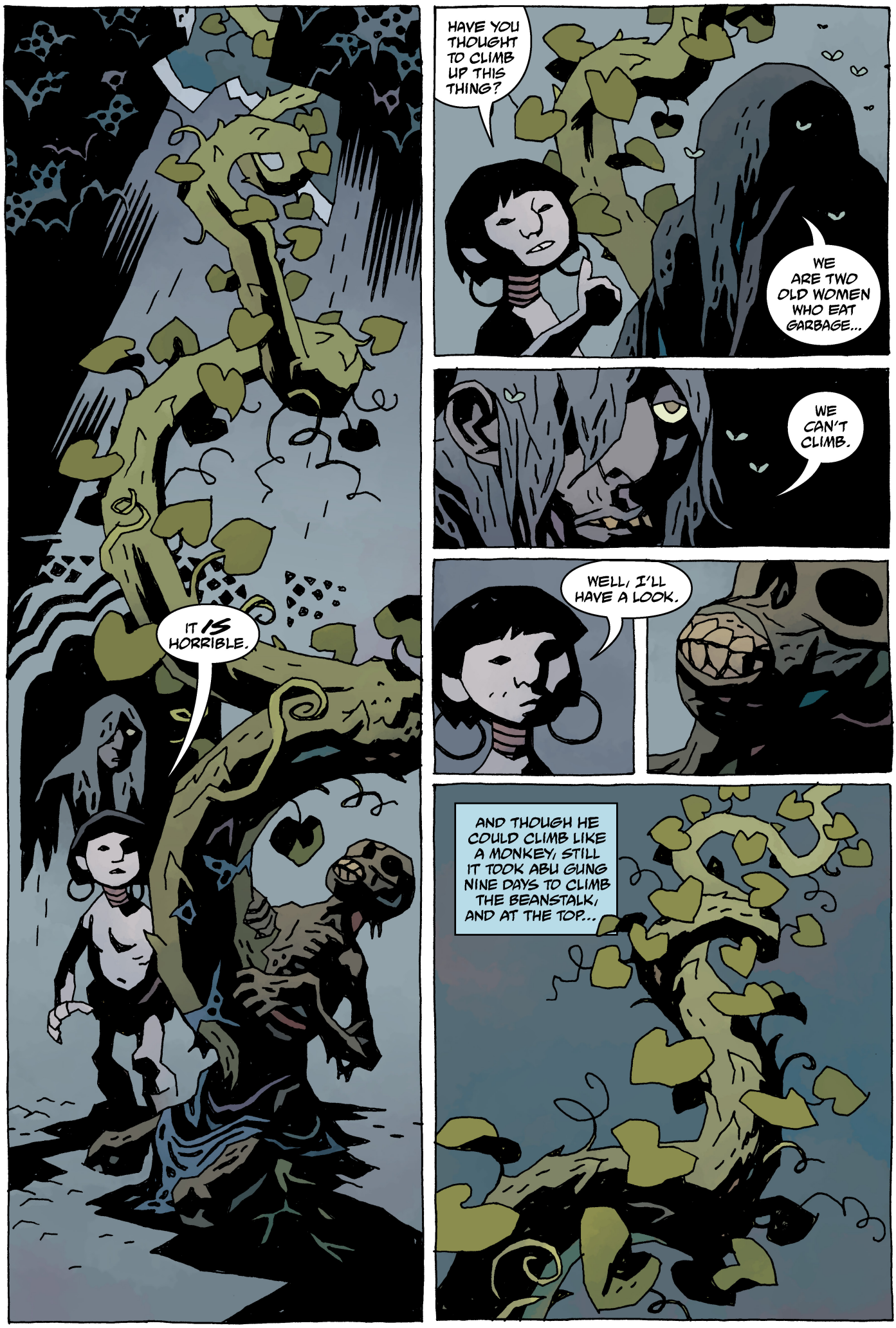
OTHER CURIOUS OBJECTS


ABU GUNG
AND THE BEANSTALK
AS TRANSLATED BY PROF. E.E. STOOP
THERE LIVED ONCE, IN THE LAND OF MU, A GUNG MAN FROM THE GUNG RIVER VALLEY...
...AND HE WAS CURSED WITH AN EVENTFUL LIFE.


HELLO?
OLD WOMAN, CAN YOU SPARE A POTATO FOR A HUNGRY BOY?
OOOH. POTATO.
IT'S LONG SINCE WE HAD ANY OF THAT SORT HERE. WE EAT ONLY BROKEN FURNITURE AND COB-WEBS, BUT WHAT LITTLE WE HAVE...YOU ARE WELCOME TO SHARE.
NO THANKS.

WE WEREN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
IT'S TRUE. ONCE WE WERE A PROUD FAMILY...
"FATHER, MOLINKA, POLINKA, AND MYSELF. BUT THEN FATHER DIED AND WE SQUANDERED ALL THIS MONEY ON JEWELRY AND FANCY SOAP."
THEN WE BEGAN TO STARVE.
FINALLY I TOOK MY JEWELS TO THE MARKET AND TRADED THEM FOR FOOD, ENOUGH TO LAST THREE YEARS...
THEN I DID THE SAME...

"THEN IT WAS POLINKA'S TURN...
"SHE TRADED HER JEWELS TO A BEGGAR IN THE STREET FOR THREE MAGIC BEANS, AND WHEN WE BEAT HER FOR BEING STUPID...
"SHE ATE THEM ALL HERSELF."
POOR POLINKA.
IT MADE A HORRIBLE NOISE.

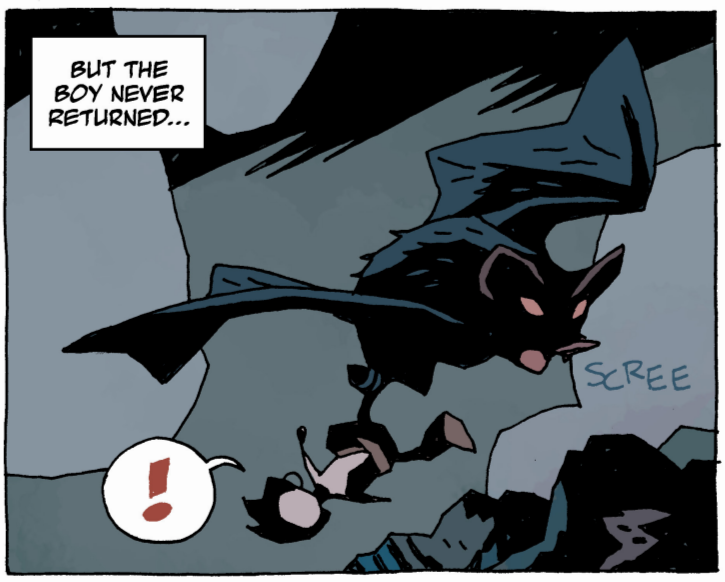

IT IS HORRIBLE.
HAVE YOU THOUGHT TO CLIMB UP THIS THING?
WE ARE TWO OLD WOMEN WHO EAT GARBAGE...
WE CAN'T CLIMB.
WELL, I'LL HAVE A LOOK.
AND THOUGH HE COULD CLIMB LIKE A MONKEY, STILL IT TOOK ABU GUNG NINE DAYS TO CLIMB THE BEANSTALK, AND AT THE TOP...

THE DEVIL WAS WAITING.
HEY, BOY, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I WON'T TELL YOU THAT, BUT I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. YOU SOLD THAT GIRL MAGIC BEANS!
HA! I'VE BEEN DOING THAT TRICK FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS. SHE GOT WHAT SHE DESERVED-- DEAD!
SHE'S NOT DEAD.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SHE'S ALIVE.
THE BEANSTALK GREW OUT OF HER LEFT NOSTRIL.
IMPOSSIBLE!
IT'S TRUE. HER NOSE IS VERY STRETCHED, AND THERE'S TALK OF SELLING HER TO THE CIRCUS.

CIRCUS...I SHOULD LIKE TO SEE A NOSE THAT BIG.
LOOK RIGHT THERE.
WHERE?
THERE.
I DON'T SEE ANY-THING.
PUNT

WHAAA!
POLINKA'S JEWELS!
AND FIVE HUNDRED TIMES MORE!
BASH!

WE SHOULD SHARE THESE WITH THE BOY.


BUT THE BOY NEVER RETURNED...
SCREE
!

WHAT ADVENTURES HE HAD AND HOW HE EVENTUALLY BECAME GUNG THE MAGNIFICENT, ALMOST-CONQUEROR OF THE ENTIRE WORLD--THOSE ARE TALES AS YET UNDISCOVERED.

THE END

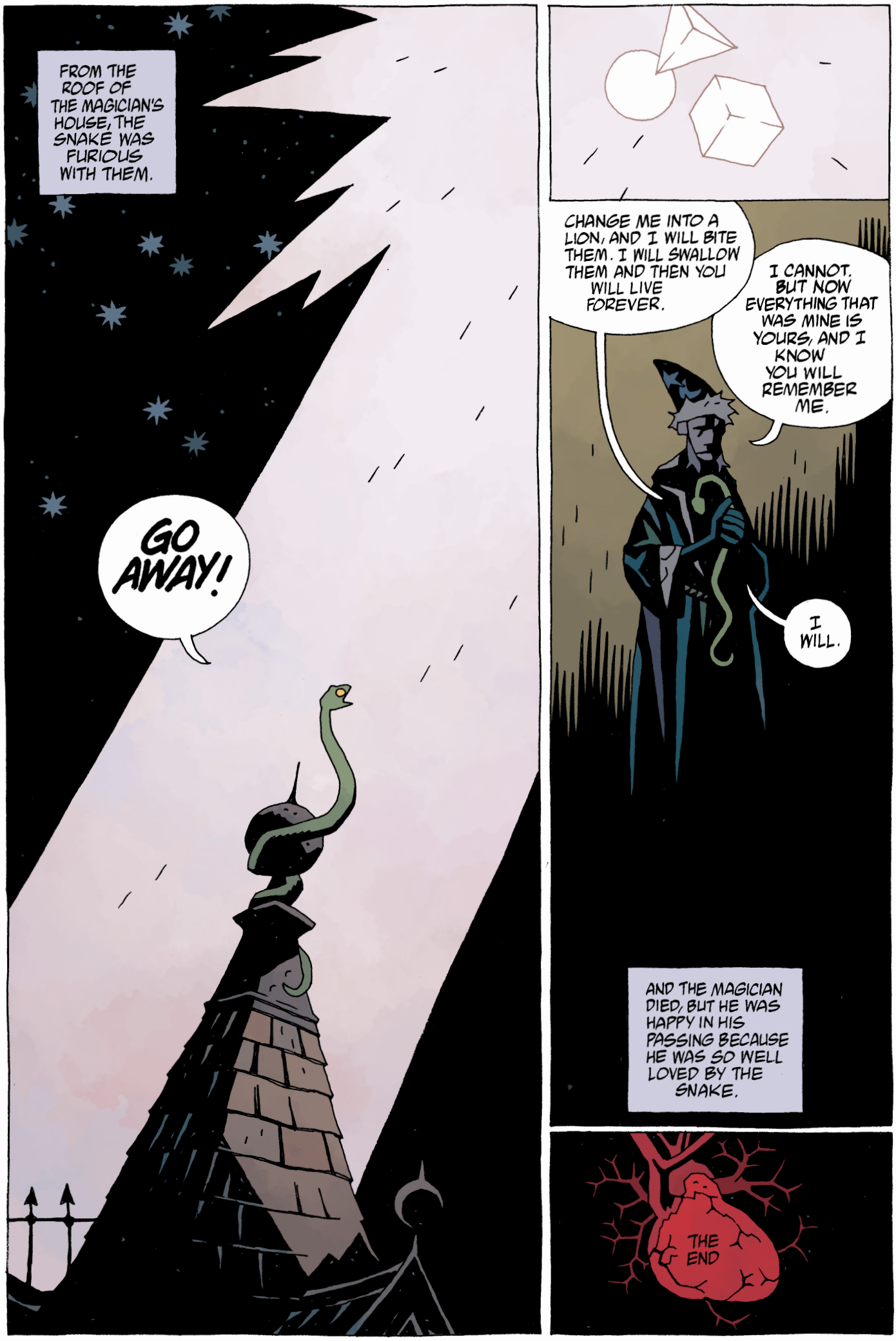
THE MAGICIAN AND THE SNAKE

BY KATIE MIGNOLA (AGE 7) AND MIKE MIGNOLA (MUCH, MUCH OLDER)

AND NOW...
POOF
ZOUNDS!
I STAND CORRECTED...
"YOU, SIR, ARE THE GREATEST MAGICIAN IN THE WORLD."
I'M NOT.
THIS IS A GREAT HONOR. WHY ARE YOU SAD?
THE SNAKE
THE MAGICIAN'S BEST FRIEND
I HAVE EXTENDED MYSELF BEYOND MY GIFTS. I HAVE SOUGHT TO ELEVATE MYSELF BEYOND MY RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE.
BUT YOU MADE THOSE SHAPES DISAPPEAR.

ONE DAY THEY WILL RETURN AND ON THAT DAY I WILL DIE.
NOT FOREVER.
UPON HEARING THIS, THE SNAKE'S HEART WAS BROKEN.
PLEASE SAY IT ISN'T TRUE.
ALL WE CAN DO IS MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT TIME WE HAVE.
WE WILL.
AND THEY DID.
AND THOSE LAST YEARS WERE THE HAPPIEST OF THEIR LIVES...

BUT ALL THINGS END.
AND ONE NIGHT THE SHAPES RETURNED.
NOT YET!


FROM THE ROOF OF THE MAGICIAN'S HOUSE, THE SNAKE WAS FURIOUS WITH THEM.
GO AWAY!
CHANGE ME INTO A LION, AND I WILL BITE THEM. I WILL SWALLOW THEM AND THEN YOU WILL LIVE FOREVER.
I CANNOT. BUT NOW EVERYTHING THAT WAS MINE IS YOURS, AND I KNOW YOU WILL REMEMBER ME.
I WILL.
AND THE MAGICIAN DIED, BUT HE WAS HAPPY IN HIS PASSING BECAUSE HE WAS SO WELL LOVED BY THE SNAKE.
THE END

THE WITCH AND HER SOUL
YOU HEAR THAT, MANX?
WHAT IS IT, HANKEL?
SKRITCH SKRITCH SKRITCH
I THINK IT'S DEATH.
BUT...

"I'M AFEARED OF DEATH."
GONG
THUD

WHAT IS IT?
SHHHH
YOU'RE A COUPLE OF SAD-LOOKING CHARACTERS.
AND I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'RE GOOD FOR ANY-THING. THAT'S SAD.
HEY!
WHO ARE YOU, ANY-WAY?
I'M THE DEVIL.
?
I DON'T THINK SO.
POOF
OH.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

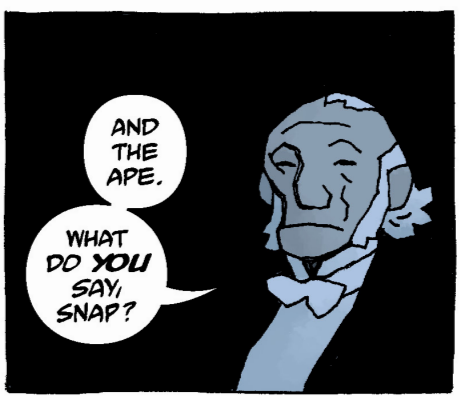
THE OLD LADY'S SHUFFLED OFF HER COIL, SO I'M HERE TO COLLECT.
I CAN SEE YOU GUYS DON'T KNOW MUCH, SO I'LL CLUE YOU IN ON HOW IT WORKS--
POOF
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
THE OLD LADY WANTED MAGIC POWERS SO SHE COULD DO SOME CRAZY STUFF, AND I GAVE 'EM TO HER BECAUSE I LIKE TROUBLE. SHE SIGNED THE BOOK AND THAT MEANS I GET HER SOUL.
I ALSO GET ANY CURIOUS OBJECTS SHE MAY HAVE CREATED *USING* THOSE POWERS-- MANIKINS, PUPPETS, OR HOMUNCULI.
WHAT?
THERE'S NOTHING FOR IT, BOYS. YOU'RE OFF TO HELL.

BUT...
WE'RE WOOD, AND LIKELY TO BURN.
A DEAL'S A DEAL, FELLAS.
AHHHH!
I'M AFRAID OF IT!
UNLESS...
?
?
I SUPPOSE I COULD TURN YOU INTO EVIL PUPPETS. BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO PROMISE TO DO SOMETHING REALLY EVIL BEFORE THE END OF TIME--
WE'LL TAKE IT!
ZAP

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
HELP
PLEASE
OOH!
PLEEEASE
I FEEL BAD FOR HER, HANKEL.
SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN GOOD, MANX. LOOK AT THE TROUBLE SHE'S GOT US INTO.
IT'S TRUE.
I DON'T EXPECT MUCH FROM THOSE GUYS, BUT I MADE EVIL PUPPETS AND THAT'S A GOOD DAY'S WORK FOR ME!
THE END.

How Doctor Snap Murdered Professor Cyclops and What Came of It. Or--

THE PRISONER OF MARS



I MISSED THE WHOLE AFFAIR, GENTLEMEN, AS I WAS OTHERWISE ENGAGED.
NO DOUBT YOU HEARD OF MY TRIAL AND LEGAL EXECUTION.
BAD BUSINESS, THAT.

IT'S TRUE. THEY SWUNG ME LIKE A PIRATE, AND, SADLY, NOT WITHOUT JUST CAUSE.
IT ALL BEGAN THE NIGHT OF THAT BIG METEOR SHOWER--
GOOD LORD!
"I HAD A FRANTIC CALL FROM PROFESSOR CYCLOPS, WHO WAS OUT AT HIS PLACE AT BLACKMOOR. APPARENTLY ONE OF THE OBJECTS HAD CRASH-LANDED IN A FIELD NEARBY."
SNAP--
?
"COME AT ONCE, MAN. I'VE MADE A DISCOVERY!"

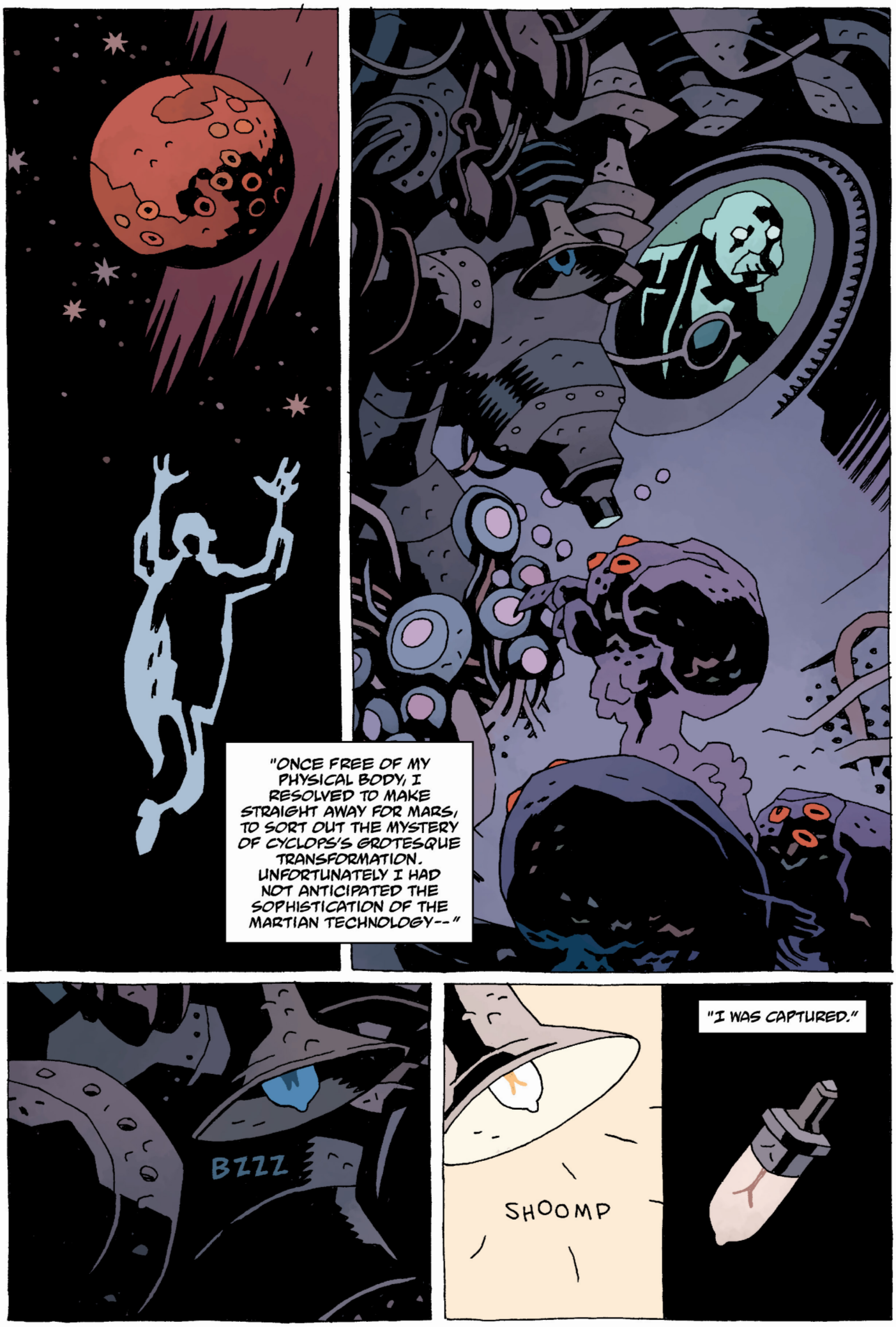
"UNFORTUNATELY I WAS ENGAGED IN RESEARCH OF MY OWN JUST THEN AND COULD NOT GET AWAY--"
GO ON. SPEAK.
POKE
POKE
A
B
"SOME WEEKS PASSED AND I HAD A SECOND CALL FROM HIM--THIS TIME IN A DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT TONE--"
PLEASE
HANG ON, CHAP. I'M ON MY WAY.
"POOR OLD CYCLOPS. IF ONLY I HAD BEEN.
"I MEANT TO--

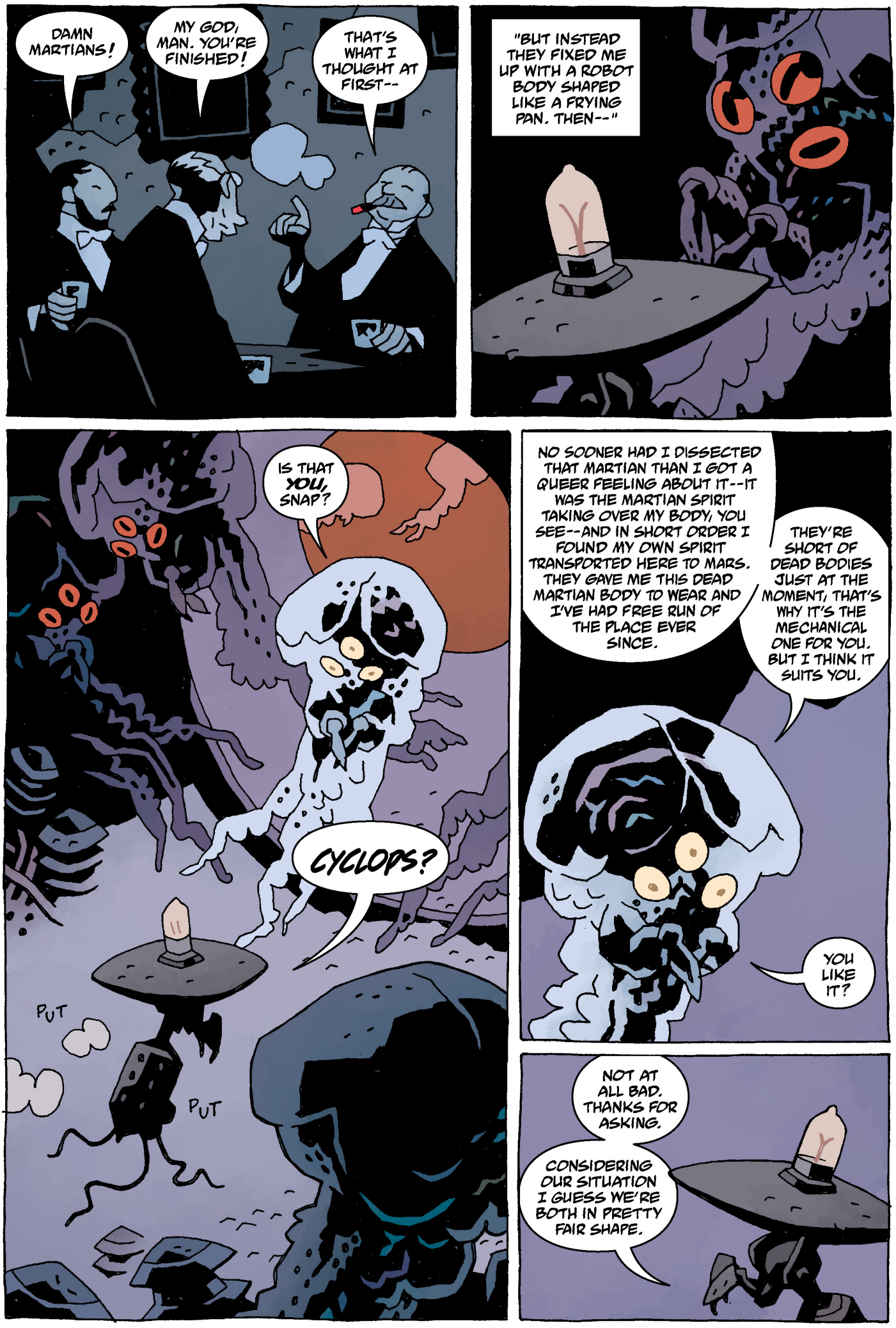
"BUT ONCE AGAIN I'D BECOME DISTRACTED AND WAS SEVERAL DAYS LATE ARRIVING."
HELLO?
1
4
2
3
21
22
23
"I HAD A SENSE RIGHT OFF THAT SOMETHING WAS AMISS."
A
B
E

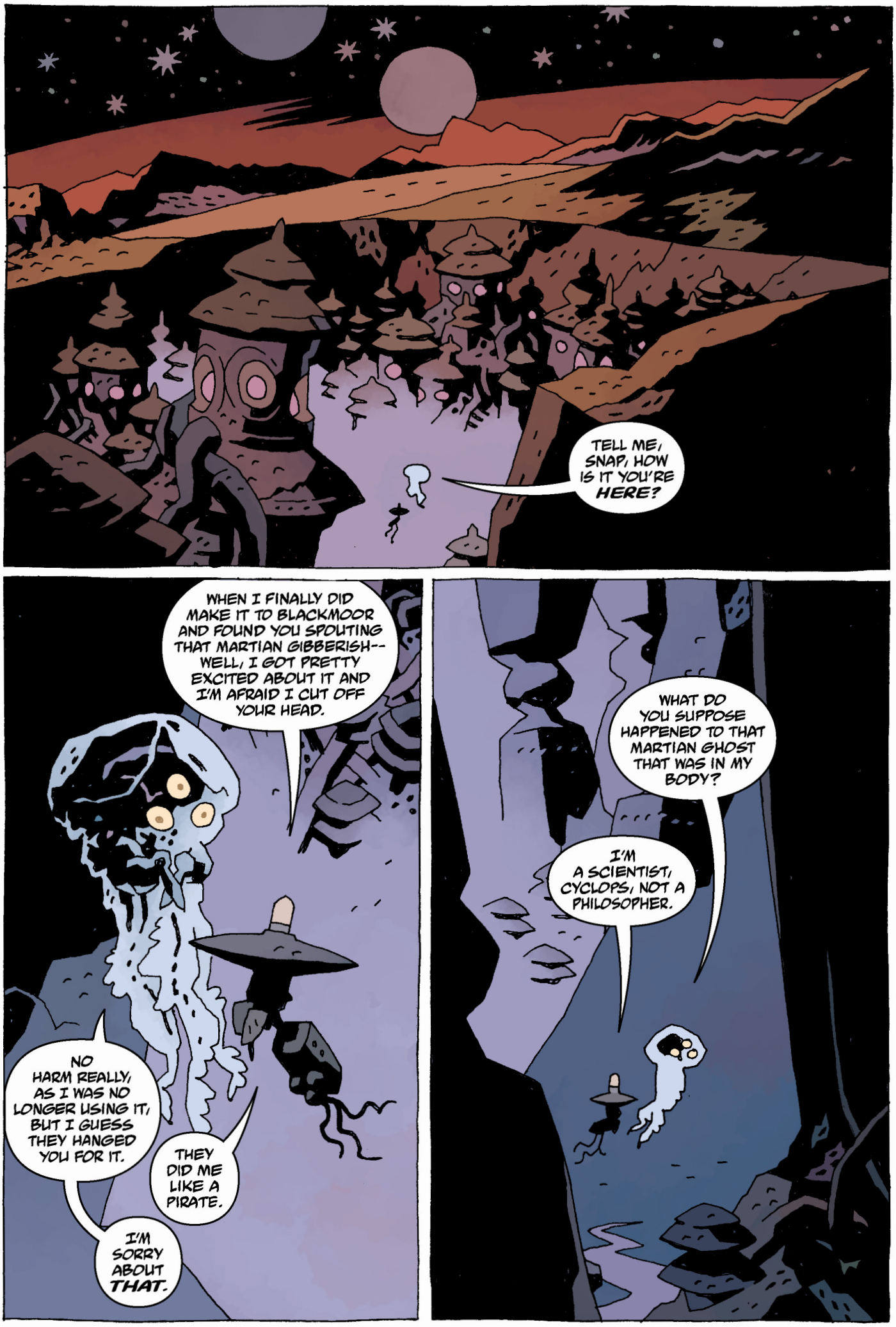
CYCLOPS?
SORRY FOR THE DELAY, OLD SPORT, BUT I'M HERE NOW.
CYCLOPS?
SOMETHING DREADFUL HAS OCCURRED.

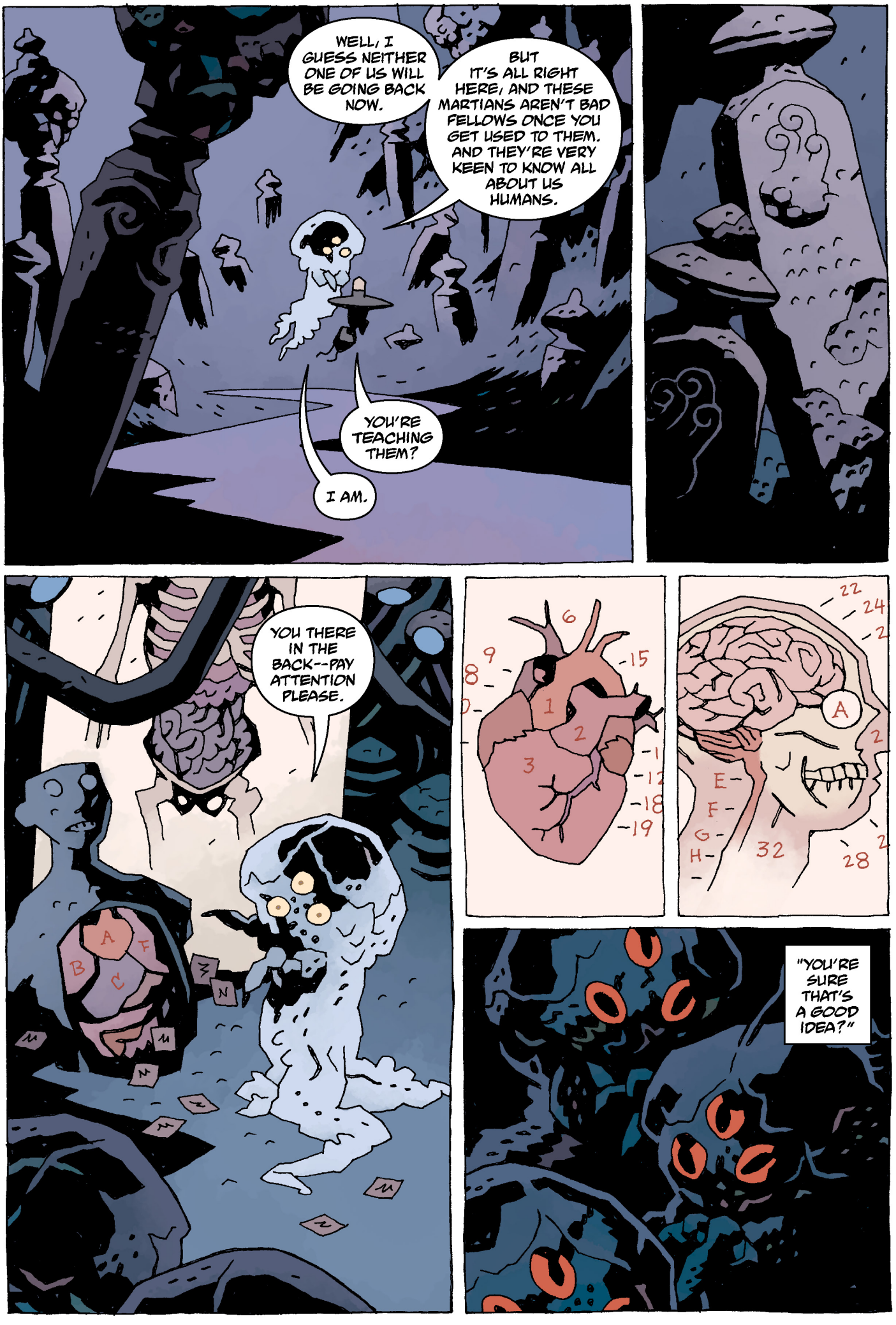
NOTES
A
B
C
D
F
623
72
58
61
BZZZZZ
HMMM.
E
F
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
1
2
3
NE COMPLETED DISSECTION
AND CURIOUS FEELING THA
OMETHING HAS GONE WR
THE DREAM AGAIN--
GOOD LORD-- MARS
MARS MAR
CYCLOPS?

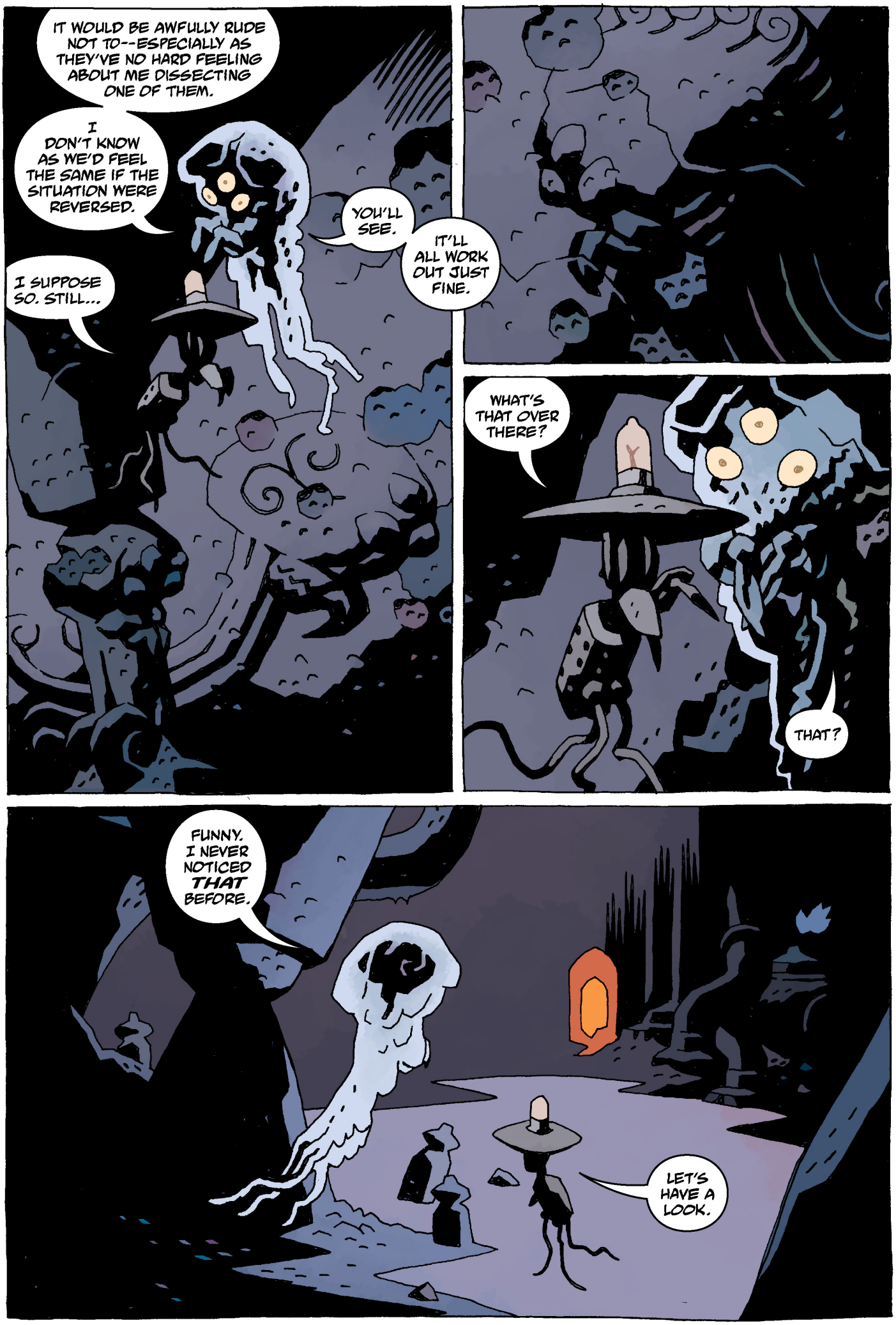
AAGUGUAAUAGOTHUC
NAAZUUAGAOOOOMM
UUAGAUHAGOTHUMAT
OOAMMASUGOTHAATU
AMMEMMETTATTUUAG
TOTUUEMMMMMMUNG
ATUUAAGUUUOO
AHHHHHHHHHHHH
STAB!
"BEING AN INEXPERIENCED MURDERER, I WAS SOON APPREHENDED AND DELIVERED TO THE COURTS--"
GUILTY.
"AND HANGED."
THIS WILL DO NICELY!


"ONCE FREE OF MY PHYSICAL BODY, I RESOLVED TO MAKE STRAIGHT AWAY FOR MARS, TO SORT OUT THE MYSTERY OF CYCLOPS'S GROTESQUE TRANSFORMATION. UNFORTUNATELY I HAD NOT ANTICIPATED THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE MARTIAN TECHNOLOGY--"
BZZZ
SHOOMP
"I WAS CAPTURED."


DAMN MARTIANS!
MY GOD, MAN. YOU'RE FINISHED!
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT AT FIRST--
"BUT INSTEAD THEY FIXED ME UP WITH A ROBOT BODY SHAPED LIKE A FRYING PAN. THEN--"
IS THAT YOU, SNAP?
CYCLOPS?
PUT
PUT
NO SOONER HAD I DISSECTED THAT MARTIAN THAN I GOT A QUEER FEELING ABOUT IT--IT WAS THE MARTIAN SPIRIT TAKING OVER MY BODY, YOU SEE--AND IN SHORT ORDER I FOUND MY OWN SPIRIT TRANSPORTED HERE TO MARS. THEY GAVE ME THIS DEAD MARTIAN BODY TO WEAR AND I'VE HAD FREE RUN OF THE PLACE EVER SINCE.
THEY'RE SHORT OF DEAD BODIES JUST AT THE MOMENT, THAT'S WHY IT'S THE MECHANICAL ONE FOR YOU. BUT I THINK IT SUITS YOU.
YOU LIKE IT?
NOT AT ALL BAD. THANKS FOR ASKING.
CONSIDERING OUR SITUATION I GUESS WE'RE BOTH IN PRETTY FAIR SHAPE.

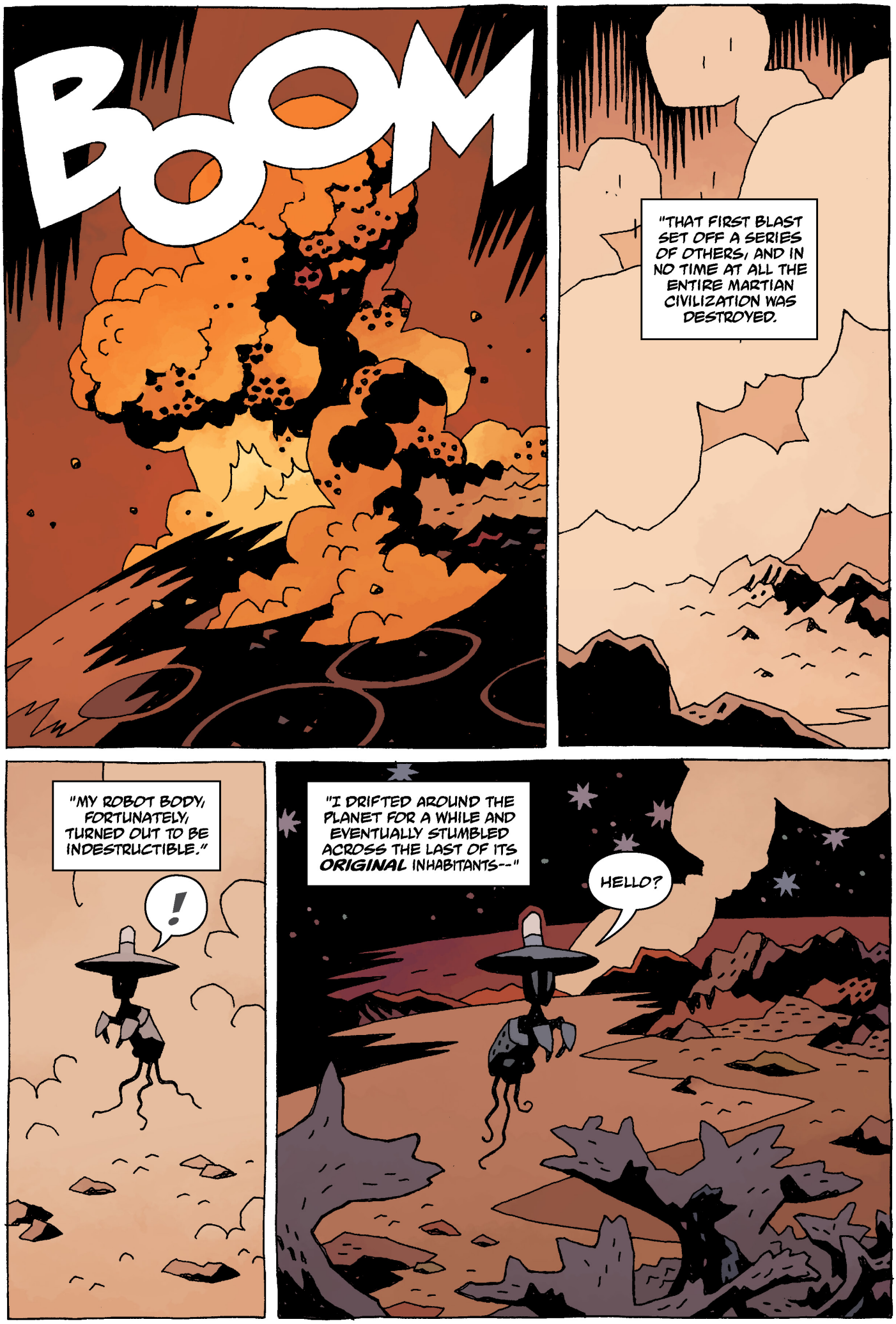

TELL ME, SNAP, HOW IS IT YOU'RE HERE?
WHEN I FINALLY DID MAKE IT TO BLACKMOOR AND FOUND YOU SPOUTING THAT MARTIAN GIBBERISH-- WELL, I GOT PRETTY EXCITED ABOUT IT AND I'M AFRAID I CUT OFF YOUR HEAD.
NO HARM REALLY, AS I WAS NO LONGER USING IT, BUT I GUESS THEY HANGED YOU FOR IT.
THEY DID ME LIKE A PIRATE.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HAPPENED TO THAT MARTIAN GHOST THAT WAS IN MY BODY?
I'M A SCIENTIST, CYCLOPS, NOT A PHILOSOPHER.

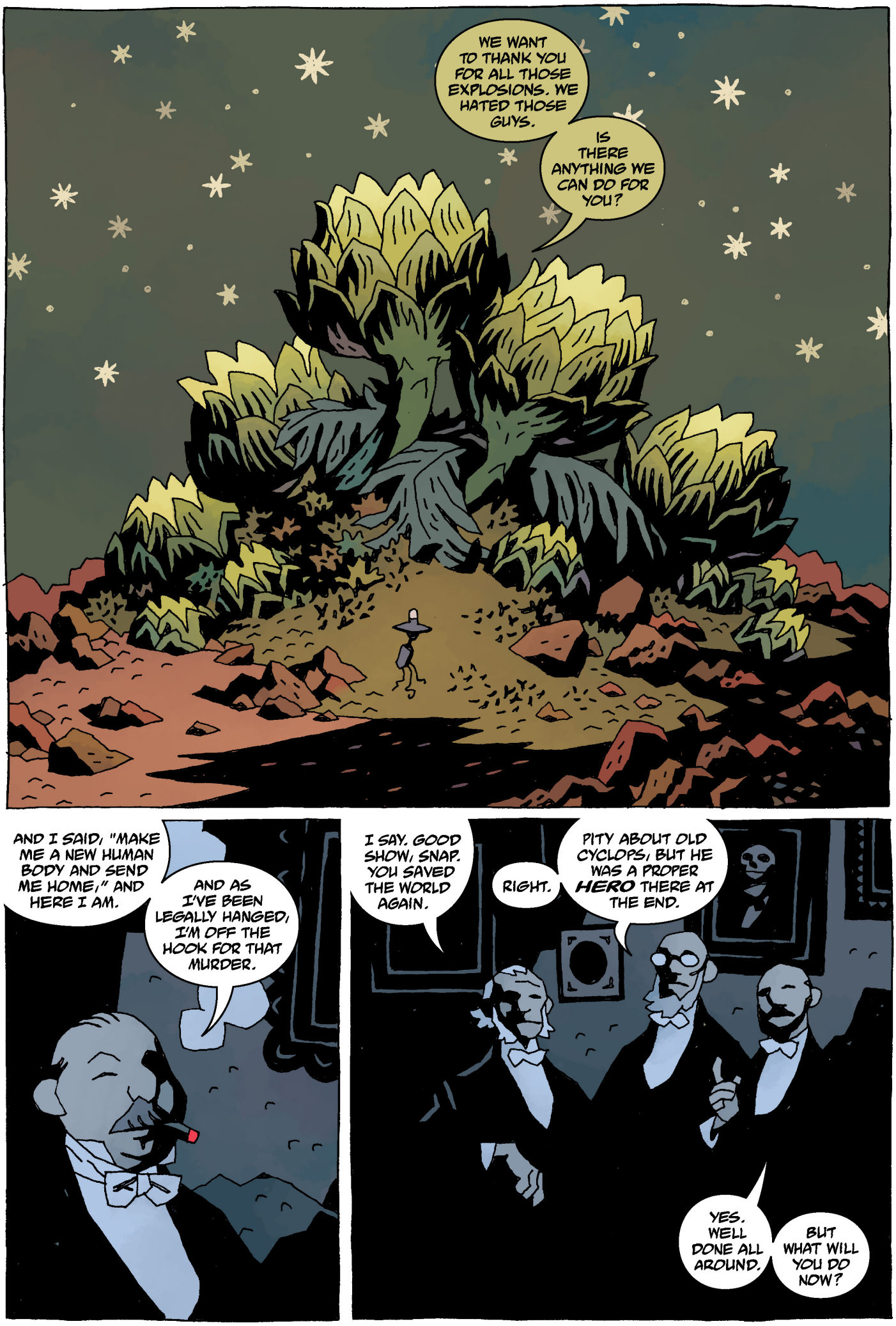

WELL, I GUESS NEITHER ONE OF US WILL BE GOING BACK NOW.
BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT HERE, AND THESE MARTIANS AREN'T BAD FELLOWS ONCE YOU GET USED TO THEM. AND THEY'RE VERY KEEN TO KNOW ALL ABOUT US HUMANS.
YOU'RE TEACHING THEM?
I AM.
YOU THERE IN THE BACK--PAY ATTENTION PLEASE.
"YOU'RE SURE THAT'S A GOOD IDEA?"

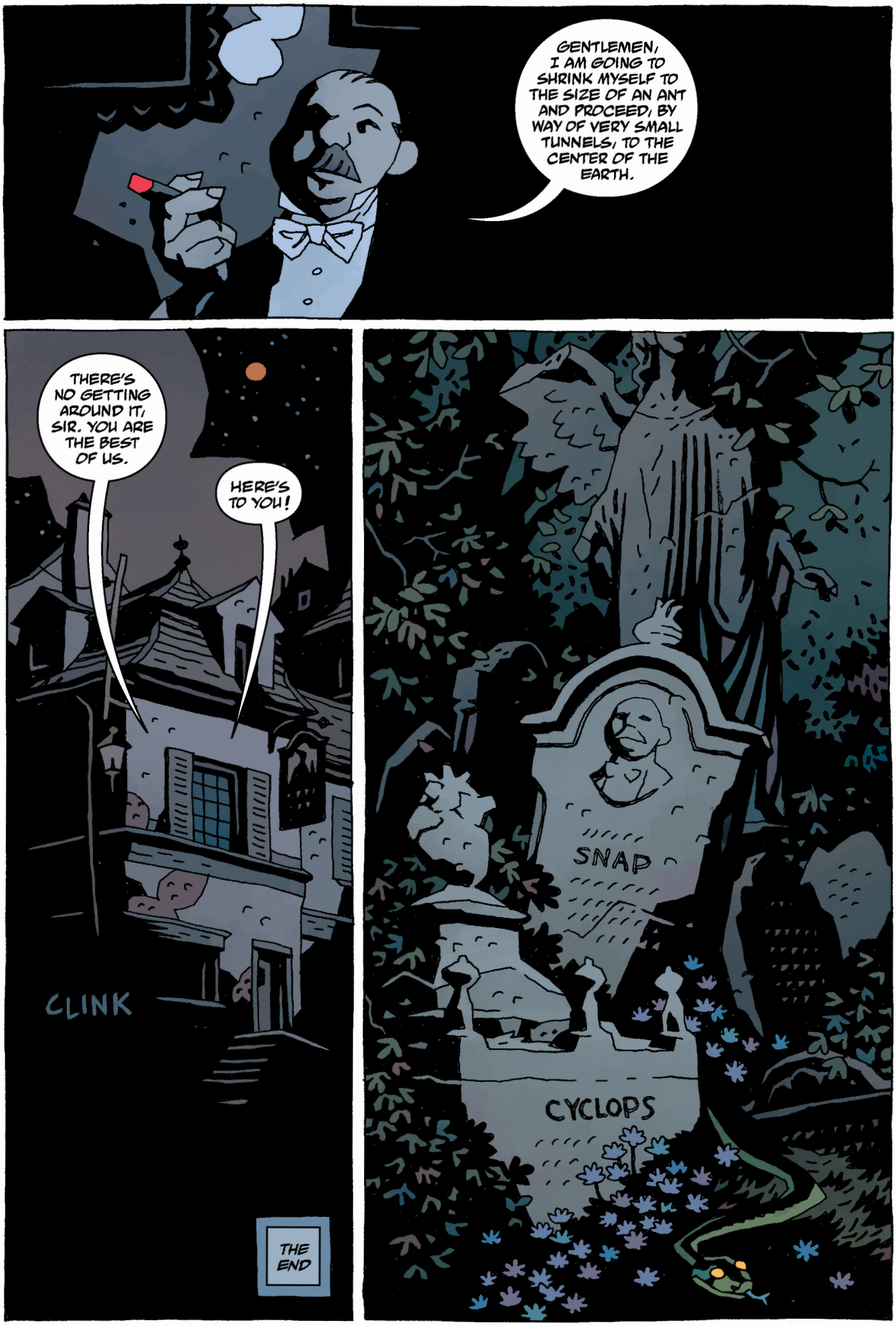

IT WOULD BE AWFULLY RUDE NOT TO--ESPECIALLY AS THEY'VE NO HARD FEELING ABOUT ME DISSECTING ONE OF THEM.
I DON'T KNOW AS WE'D FEEL THE SAME IF THE SITUATION WERE REVERSED.
I SUPPOSE SO. STILL...
YOU'LL SEE.
IT'LL ALL WORK OUT JUST FINE.
WHAT'S THAT OVER THERE?
THAT?
FUNNY. I NEVER NOTICED THAT BEFORE.
LET'S HAVE A LOOK.

OH NO.
I WAS AFRAID OF SOME-THING LIKE THIS...
TAP TAP TAP
EARTH
"IT'S AN INVASION!"

ALL MY FAULT...
MUST DO SOMETHING...
GET OUT OF HERE, SNAP! SAVE YOURSELF!
HOWEVER IT GOES, SIR, I'M WITH YOU!
ALL RIGHT THEN...
HEY! YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THOSE--?
BZZT--


BOOM
"THAT FIRST BLAST SET OFF A SERIES OF OTHERS, AND IN NO TIME AT ALL THE ENTIRE MARTIAN CIVILIZATION WAS DESTROYED.
"MY ROBOT BODY, FORTUNATELY, TURNED OUT TO BE INDESTRUCTIBLE."
!
"I DRIFTED AROUND THE PLANET FOR A WHILE AND EVENTUALLY STUMBLED ACROSS THE LAST OF ITS ORIGINAL INHABITANTS--"
HELLO?


WE WANT TO THANK YOU FOR ALL THOSE EXPLOSIONS. WE HATED THOSE GUYS.
IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU?
AND I SAID, "MAKE ME A NEW HUMAN BODY AND SEND ME HOME," AND HERE I AM.
AND AS I'VE BEEN LEGALLY HANGED, I'M OFF THE HOOK FOR THAT MURDER.
I SAY. GOOD SHOW, SNAP. YOU SAVED THE WORLD AGAIN.
RIGHT.
PITY ABOUT OLD CYCLOPS, BUT HE WAS A PROPER HERO THERE AT THE END.
YES. WELL DONE ALL AROUND.
BUT WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?


GENTLEMEN, I AM GOING TO SHRINK MYSELF TO THE SIZE OF AN ANT AND PROCEED, BY WAY OF VERY SMALL TUNNELS, TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH.
THERE'S NO GETTING AROUND IT, SIR. YOU ARE THE BEST OF US.
HERE'S TO YOU!
CLINK
THE END
SNAP
CYCLOPS

M

IN THE CHAPEL OF CURIOUS OBJECTS
BONG

CREEE--
61
B
C
A
THE
END

PART THREE

NEW 20TH ANNIVERSARY BONUS CURIOSITIES

21
M

568

M
2018

23

M
2018

2018

PART FOUR

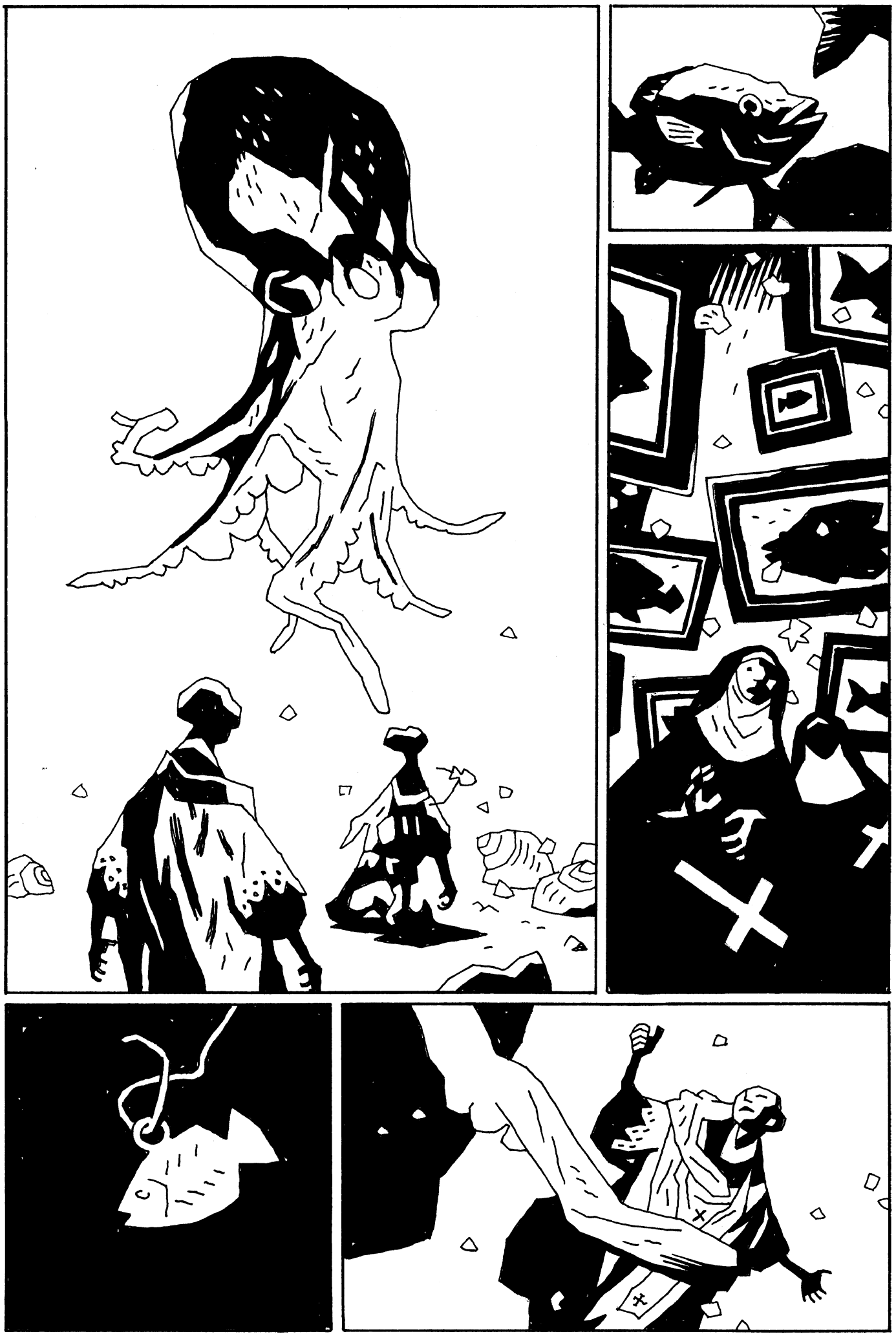
THE GREAT UNPUBLISHED CURIOSITY

AXORR

SLAYER OF DEMONS

GRRRR

RRRAAAAAA



BOOM

AAAAA
AAAAA
THUD

KLINK
CREEEEEEE--

GASP
HAK
CHOKE

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM

STAB

AXORR
SLAYER OF DEMONS

AXORR

Some years back, I promised Eric Powell I'd do a book that he could publish. I was excited about it. I plotted it. It was going to be thirty-two pages. I started drawing it, was having a lot of fun, was really happy with what I was doing, and then somewhere around page nineteen I realized I had no idea how to script the damn thing. Sure, I could have probably figured something out. But at the time it just was not happening. And maybe some of you artists and writers out there know what this is like (because it can't just be me). You've got this thing going, it's living and breathing and working, and then, for whatever reason, you start to second-guess yourself. And then you look down and… The thing just isn't breathing anymore. That's what happened here. I'm super happy with what I did, and will always feel terrible about not coming through with the book for Eric. I suspect I'll be apologizing to him every time I see him forever. Meanwhile, I've got this strange unfinished thing I really like. It's been sitting in a drawer, but I think if it belongs anywhere it belongs here, with all the other ghosts and turnip monsters, aliens, monkeys, magicians, and snakes.

So, *Axorr, Slayer of Demons*. Here's the story—

We start with an exorcism in some sort of fish museum, and the possessed guy coughs up a giant evil flying octopus. The octopus takes off with the priest and starts blowing poison gas all over the place. Eventually the octopus drops the priest and he dies, and his soul flies out in the form of a bird. At the same time, a couple of guys (city officials of some kind) go down to the dungeon to find the legendary hero Axorr, Slayer of Demons, to beg him to save the kingdom. They mistake an old man for Axorr, but it turns out Axorr is the skeleton in the corner. He's been down there for a couple hundred years, but it's okay. Axorr just asks for his sword back (though for some reason he refers to it as his hammer), and when he gets it back he turns into a giant and takes off to fight the octopus. Back in the dungeon, the old man suddenly remembers that he's a werewolf and that a long time ago he ate a bunch of people including the royal family. He's gotten speared and run off, and since then he's been hiding out down in the dungeon. The two guys get spooked by this and run off. Axorr keeps fighting, and the werewolf gets sad. He feels bad about eating all those people, even though it was a long time ago. And that takes us through the pages I drew. Here's the rest: The priest's soul (in bird shape) stops by to try and make the sad werewolf feel better. Axorr keeps fighting and he and the octopus pretty much kill each other. I think maybe the octopus was going to get stabbed and then explode. Maybe Axorr's sword is magic? I don't remember it too clearly. I never wrote any of this stuff down. Anyway, Axorr ends up some kind of giant stone statue so the people of the kingdom (those not killed by the poison octopus gas) will have something to put flowers in front of, so that's nice. The werewolf is led out of town by the bird priest and comes to a creepy old church where he's told his sins can be forgiven. He goes in and finds a fifteen-foot-tall wooden Jesus puppet. The puppet starts to bless the werewolf but gets hit my lighting. Everything goes up in flames, including the werewolf. The werewolf jumps out of the window and floats away down the river, I guess so we can end the story as we started it, with fish. And that's it. I know there are going to be people out there saying that I should finish the thing but, really, it can't be done. Certainly not now. I leave you to imagine the ending—probably it will be better in your head than anything I could have put on paper. Rest in peace, Axorr. You were great while you lasted.

Oh, the name "Axorr"—for years I would find myself on panels explaining why I named the character Hellboy, saying that I needed something a little silly so the audience would understand that I knew that all this stuff was a bit silly. If I had made up the character when I was younger, coming off that phase where I was reading a lot of that old sword and sorcery stuff, I would have given him some deadly serious name like Axorr, Demon Slayer. Just something I said one day without thinking and after that, every time I told that story, it was always Axorr. It just stuck, so eventually I had to use it for something.

There you go.

STORY NOTES

THE AMAZING SCREW-ON HEAD started out as an idea for a toy. It wasn't a serious idea, just a thought—a robot head, threaded like a light bulb, that you could screw into different robot bodies. I like that. I still want that toy. But I'm not a toy designer so I turned the thing into a comic. At first it was going to be something very fun and modern, the kind of thing Nickelodeon makes cartoons out of, but as I started getting serious about drawing it, it started to slide into the kind of stuff I really like to draw—low-tech machines, statues, rooftops, and old, dusty Victorians. And if there was going to be a president in it, he was going to have to be Lincoln. In the end (and the whole thing went pretty fast), I created a comic that was pretty much just for me. I didn't expect anyone else to care about it, so I was pretty surprised when right away people started telling me it was the best thing I'd ever done. I like when *that* happens. It was published as a one-issue comic in 2002 and won the 2003 Eisner Award for Best Humor Publication.

THE MAGICIAN AND THE SNAKE: One day an editor at Dark Horse called and asked me to do a story for an anthology she was putting together—she only asked that it not be a Hellboy story. I said sure, but had no idea what I was going to do. A day or two later (it might have been the same day, but that seems a little too good to be true), I picked up my daughter (then age seven) from school. On the walk home, she told me about a picture she had drawn that day—a snake on a rooftop "being furious" with some floating objects. What? She went on to tell me the story behind the picture, and I remember thinking, "I'm not quite sure what this is, but it's better than anything I'm going to come up with." I drew the story pretty fast and I only recall one snag—I wanted the magician to be a Victorian stage magician, but my daughter (being seven) insisted on the pointed hat. I think she was right. The story appeared in the book *Happy Endings* (I swear I didn't know that was the title when I did the story) in 2002 and won the 2003 Eisner Award for Best Short Story. That was a good year.

ABU GUNG AND THE BEANSTALK was originally done back in 1998 for the Dark Horse anthology *Scatterbrain*. I always liked the story (and most of the dialogue) but was never happy with the way it was drawn. For this book I've completely redrawn it and expanded it from five pages to nine—mostly so I could work in that exciting bean-sprouting sequence.

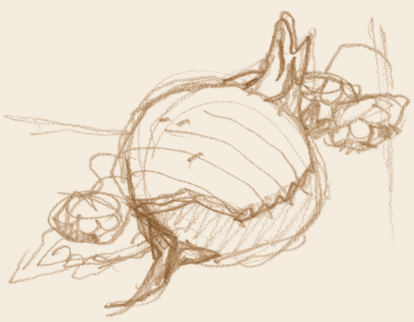
THE WITCH AND HER SOUL sprang into my head fully formed one day, complete with the names Hankel and Manx, which is a good thing because I could never have made up those names—though I suppose I did.

Names are tough. The only real trouble I had with THE PRISONER OF MARS was coming up with a name for the murdered professor. For a while his name was going to be Mister Kaleidoscope, but fortunately I came to my senses. Both "The Witch and Her Soul" and "The Prisoner of Mars" were done specifically for this book.

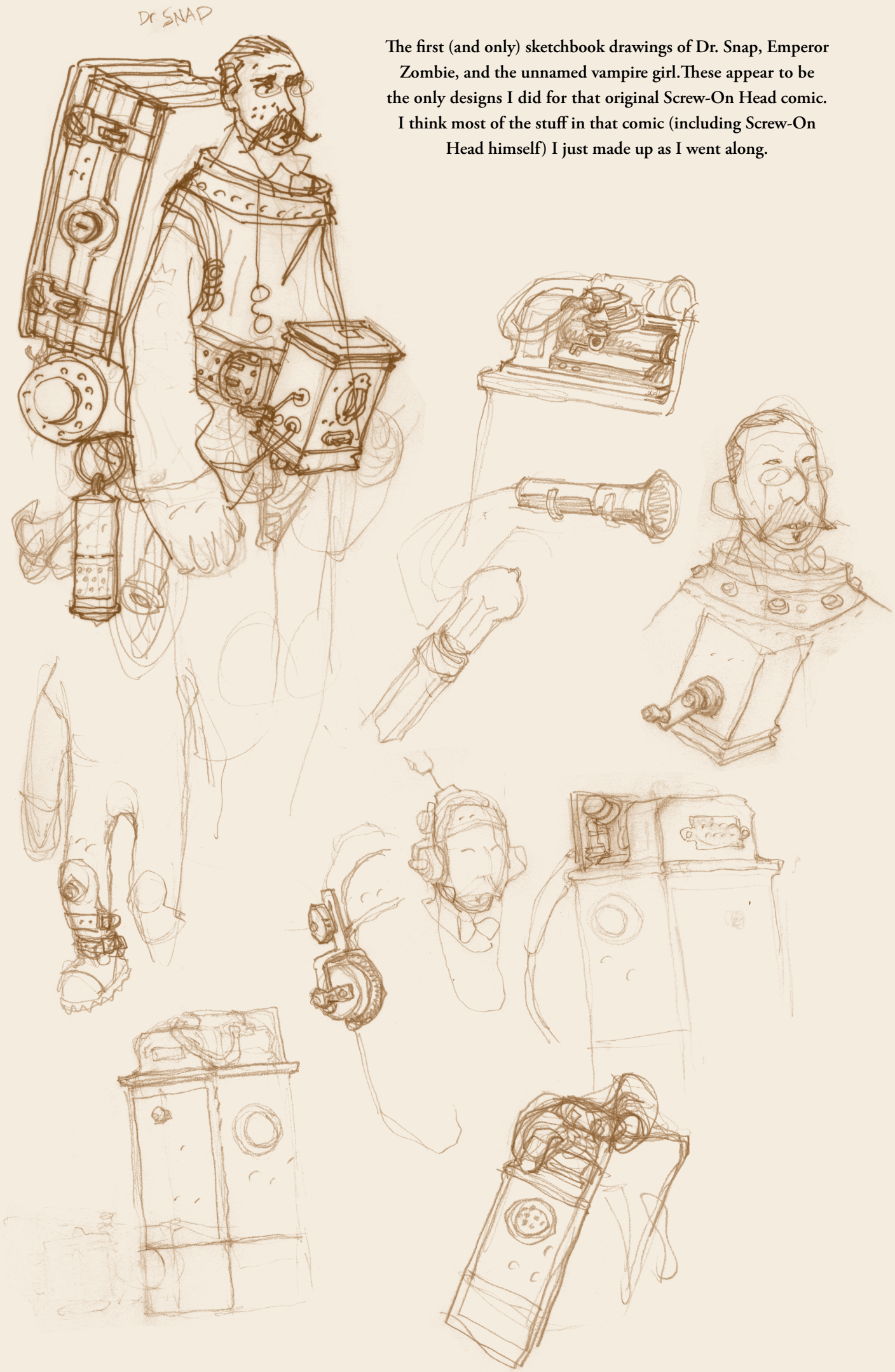
IN THE CHAPEL OF CURIOUS OBJECTS isn't a story at all. It just felt like it was the thing needed to finish the book, to maybe tie the whole thing together in a way that can't quite be explained—like a little hat for an oddly shaped head. And that's about all there is to say about that.

THE END

SKETCHBOOK



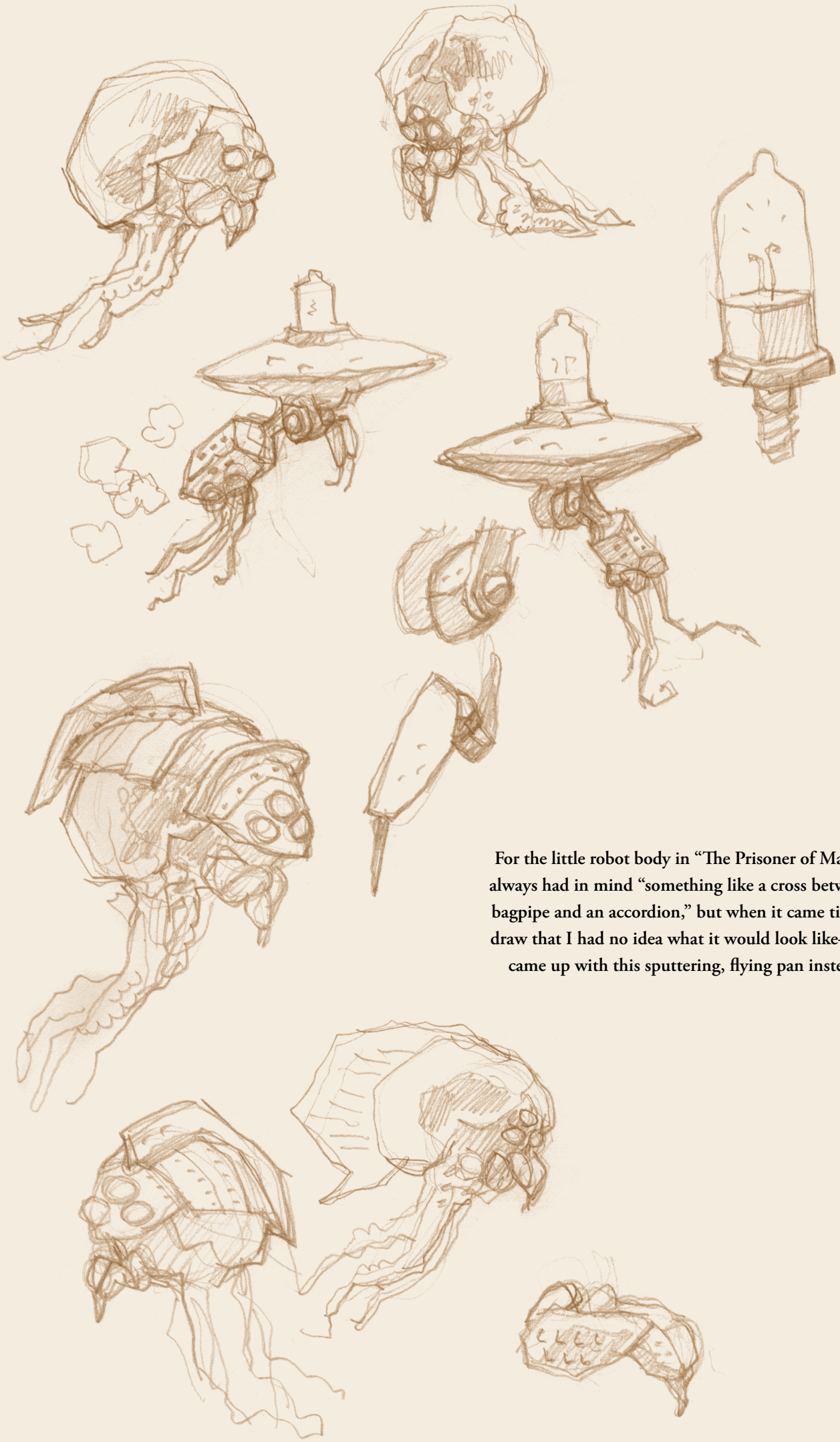
Rough for the cover of this book. Actually this was my second version of the cover. I finished the first version (now page 2 of this book) and was very happy with it, but just felt that something more formal might suit the title better.



The first (and only) sketchbook drawings of Dr. Snap, Emperor Zombie, and the unnamed vampire girl. These appear to be the only designs I did for that original Screw-On Head comic. I think most of the stuff in that comic (including Screw-On Head himself) I just made up as I went along.

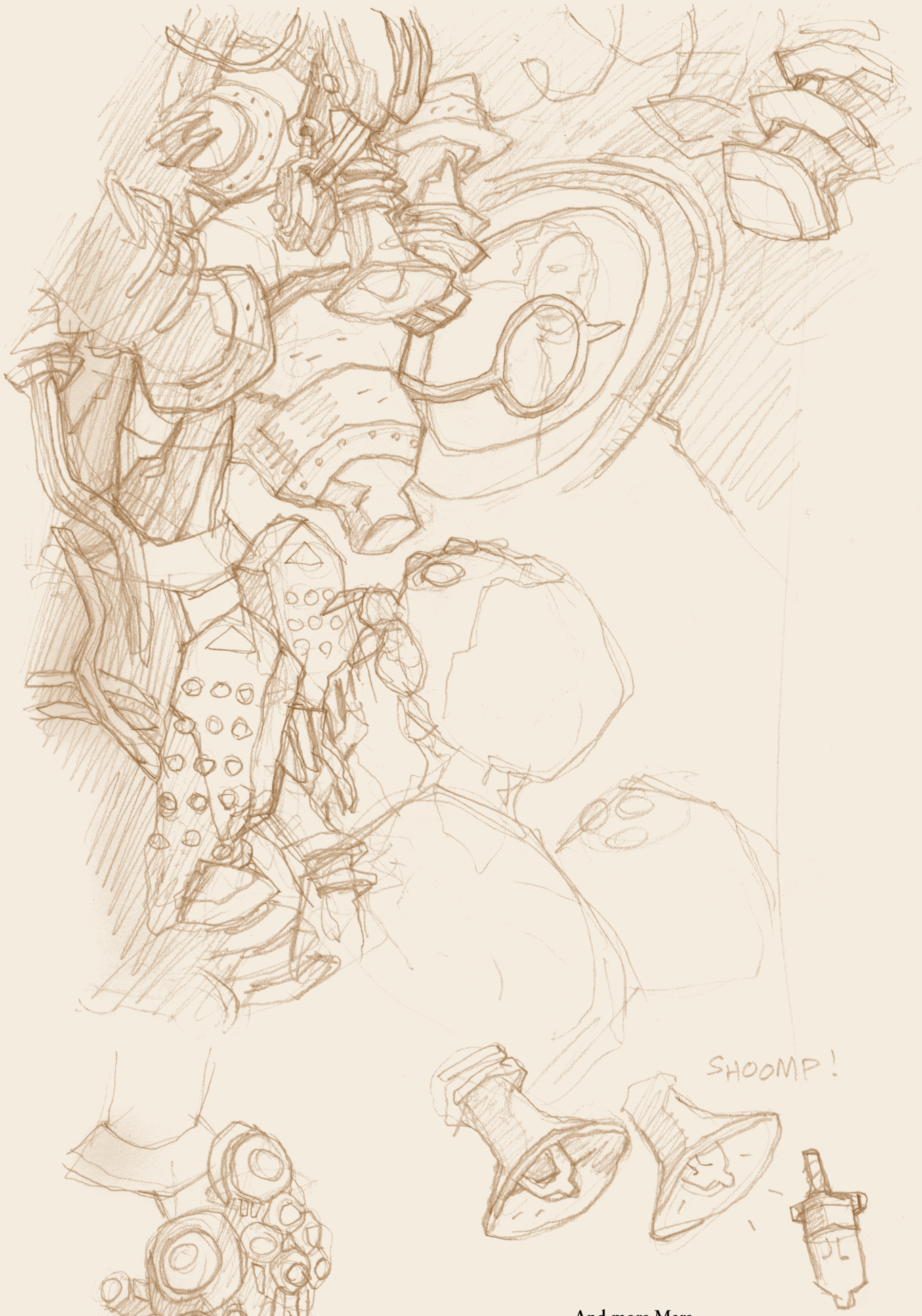
There are no untold Screw-On Head stories. Everything I wanted to do with him I did in that one comic. That doesn't mean I don't love him—so nothing should be read into the fact that the only new drawing I did of the character for this book (other than the covers) is a drawing of him being torn to pieces by giant crabs.

While this new version of "Abu Gung and the Beanstalk" is much better drawn than the original, most of the character designs are pretty much the same—though in the original the devil had a (badly drawn) bird instead of a bat, and he didn't have that snazzy little umbrella.



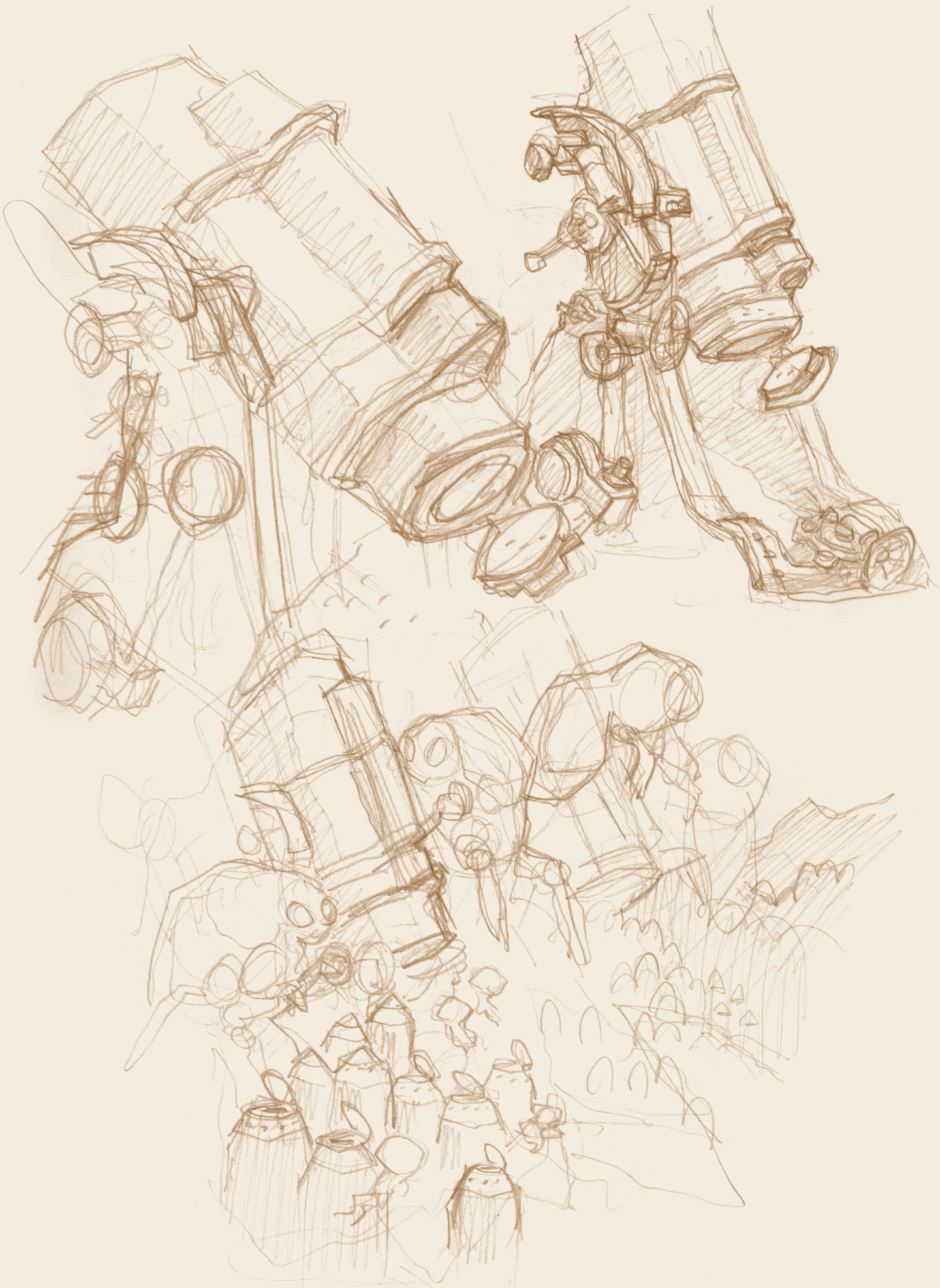
For the little robot body in “The Prisoner of Mars,” I always had in mind “something like a cross between a bagpipe and an accordion,” but when it came time to draw that I had no idea what it would look like—so I came up with this sputtering, flying pan instead.

More Mars stuff.



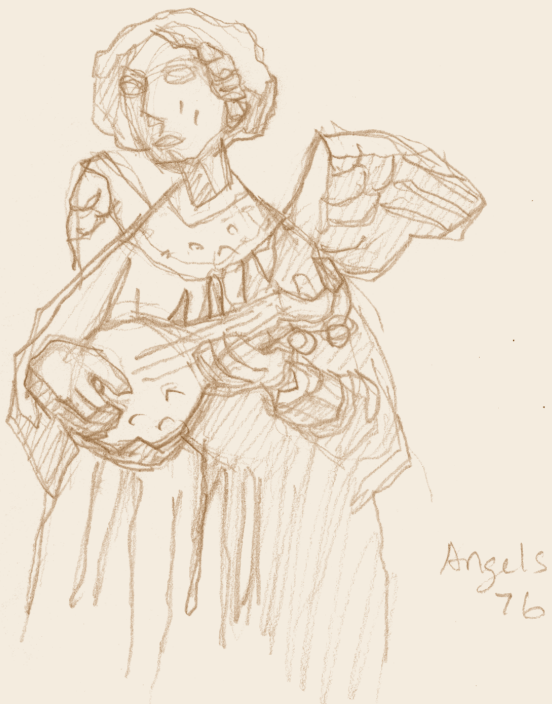
And more Mars.

I rarely spend this much time working stuff out in my sketchbook, but I was having way too much fun with these guys.



SPAIN 19
ref
ref
see ref for door
ref
SPAIN 104
Add playing cards in hand

An unused doorway (far left), plus puppets and more puppets.



These are just a few of the dozens of puppets I designed. I was still having way too much fun, and "In the Chapel of Curious Objects" was originally going to be longer, with more pages of drifting through the chapel, looking at puppets. I was never going to get tired of drawing those puppets, but in the end I was afraid the reader might get tired of looking at them. They say less is more . . . though I'm not sure if that really applies to spooky old puppets.

MIKE MIGNOLA

Victorian flying machines, a mechanical head, tomb robberies, ghosts, witches, puppets, aliens, and giant vegetables—a dizzy parade of curiosities between these covers, including the Eisner Award–winning stories "The Amazing Screw-On Head" and "The Magician and the Snake."

This special hardcover edition of *The Amazing Screw-On Head and Other Curious Objects* celebrates the 20th anniversary of the comic's original publication, with 40 pages of new material by Mike Mignola, including his 19-page, never-before-published comic *Axorr*!

DARK HORSE BOOKS